# THE LAST REFUGE

HENRY B. FULLER

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
OF THE SAGE ENDOWMENT
FUND GIVEN IN 1891 BY
HENRY WILLIAMS SAGE

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924021991843

## Henry B. Fuller

FROM THE OTHER SIDE. Stories of Transatlantic Travel. 16mo, $1.25.

THE LAST REFUGE. Crown 8vo, $1.50.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.
BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

# THE LAST REFUGE

# THE LAST REFUGE

## A Sicilian Romance

BY

HENRY B. FULLER

O Semprerinascente, o fiore di tutte le stirpi,
Aroma di tutta la terra,
Italia! Italia!
*D'Annunzio.*

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1900

COPYRIGHT, 1900, BY HENRY B. FULLER.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# CONTENTS

PART I.

PAGE

THE TWO ROMES . . . . . 1

PART II.

IN PURSUIT . . . . . 36

PART III.

STILL SOUTHWARD . . . . . 81

PART IV.

THE PALACE OF PLEASURE . . . . . 117

PART V.

APPLES OF DISCORD . . . . . 163

PART VI.

MANŒUVRINGS . . . . . 204

PART VII.

THE CITY OF HAPPINESS . . . . . 240

# THE LAST REFUGE

## PART I. — THE TWO ROMES

### I

"So, then," said the Freiherr, half gravely, half whimsically, "we understand each other. From this day forth my dependence shall be wholly on you."

He raised his hand from the travertine balustrade and placed it, with a kind of fond appeal, upon young Bruno's shoulder. "Yes, your eyes shall be my eyes; your senses shall be my senses. I shall see things as you see them, and feel them as you feel them; and the world that was so beautiful in my youth shall become beautiful once again."

Bruno turned his dark eyes upon his new found friend in a glance that was full of good-will, and as full of sympathy as his years would allow.

"I will do my best for you. But the world is beautiful already, and nowhere more beautiful than here." The young man's glance reverted once more to the panorama spread out beneath them and around them: the winding valley of the

Tiber, whose encircling hills held aloft the pines and cypresses of many a storied villa; the wide huddle of red-tiled roofs which sheltered the utmost that poor man may do with pen and pencil and chisel; the noble and graceful sweep of more mountain-chains than one, felt if not indeed actually seen; and the numberless domes that rose everywhere to swell in unison with the expansive masses of cumuli that heaped themselves up in the heavens to catch the last light of the disappearing sun.

"Beautiful? I felt it so, too — once," said the Freiherr, with a pathetic little moan. "What would I give to feel it so once more!"

Rome lay before them — the two Romes, rather: the Rome of youth, and the Rome of the imminent middle years; and the two pairs of eyes that scanned this impressive volume from the parapet of the Pincian read it in two different lights and toward two different ends. To young Bruno de' Brunelli it was a book of novelties and wonders — a book that others indeed had read before him, but that still, by some magic process of rejuvenation, held its pristine freshness all unimpaired. To the Freiherr of Kaltenau it had come to be a volume dingy and dismal and disappointing beyond all others; dog-eared, thumb-marked by much unworthy handling; stale, empty, and unprofitable utterly. And as each of them saw Rome, so each of them saw the world. Yet who shall blame you, Rome, if you are one thing when seen for the first

time at twenty, and another when seen for the second time at forty? If we may blame you, we may blame the whole wide world as well. The Freiherr, despite multiplied dissatisfactions and disenchantments, was not yet ready to blame the world. "It is old, and worn, and very shabby, true," he would say, "but it is not beyond the animating and revivifying influences of youth. The new generation comes rolling up in its multitudinous waves against the rocky shelvings of Things as They Are, and flings its tonic spray into our poor parchment-dry faces as we stand peering out disconsolate into vague nothingness upon an unanswering shore. And for me, who shall be forty within a month, what last resort remains? The last of all, as it should seem, must be in youth."

## II

Theodor Egmont, Freiherr of Kaltenau, for the first time in eighteen years, and for the second time in his life, had left his ancestral seat in the Vorarlberg to descend into Italy. But the years had wrought their difference: the second coming was not like the first. The frank and facile enthusiasms of a youth celebrating his majority were far beyond the reach of a man who was upon the point of completing his fourth decade. Como told him so, and Cremona, and Verona, and Venice, and Florence; and Rome had made it the plainest of all. No longer did his heart leap up to meet the

mountains round about Bellagio; no longer could the rapid swirls of Adige sweep him on in a transport to other scenes brighter and fairer still. Venice was the seamy side of a stage curtain; Florence was a dusty rug dimmed by the careless tramplings of thousands of ignoble feet. The Freiherr felt all this with a dull and puzzled pain. Something was slipping away from him, and he had no power to reach out and call it back. Something, indeed, had slipped away from him, but back it should and must be brought. The Freiherr gallantly held despair at arm's-length; "I will make my final stand at Rome," he said.

This resolution he uttered as he paced, with firm-set jaw and contracted brows, one of the more remote of those shady and solitary alleys that burrow their alluring way through the greenery of the Cascine at Florence. But the yellow Arno, just beyond, had no message for him; nor could Monte Morello, looming up vaguely blue through the beeches and lindens, evoke a responsive note. Nature delighted him not, nor man, nor the works of man; he thought of the churches and galleries with indignation and dread. "What has happened to me?" he asked himself. "I am like a violin string that from mere slackness gives forth no sound. I am like a photographic plate that from exposure has lost its capacity for receiving impressions." His thoughts went back ruefully to those Venetian photographers who follow old-fashioned methods within the vestibule of St. Mark's, and

who, on dull days, must needs make an exposure of half an hour to get any result at all. "Perhaps, when all 's said," he thought, hopefully, "time may be the necessary element. But I have not so many half hours remaining as I once had; nor am I come to Italy to plant myself for an indefinite period upon one spot. Far better to take my poor dulled self at once to some competent practitioner and be resensitized!"

His thoughts roamed back over the past eighteen years, and he could not but acknowledge, at the close of his retrospect, that the life of the Freiherr of Kaltenau had been indeed too free; — too free from ties, from duties, from obligations, from restraints; too free from guidance, too free from the kindly pressure of any ordering hand. He felt himself to be too like a fluent stream for which no watchful guardian had reared the banks needed to give direction, effect, serviceableness to its course; on the contrary, he had spread himself out wide, thin, ineffective, in many directions. So far from performing the task of a respectable and self-respecting canal, he was but in too great danger of becoming a mere succession of shallow and stagnant pools. "If I stand still for a single half hour too long," he thought, "the slime will begin to collect upon me. And that" — firmly — "must not be."

He felt himself at once too old and too young, too experienced and too inexperienced. He knew some things that he should be only too glad to

forget, and felt himself too innocent in certain matters that every man of his age should have familiarized himself with. Life had offered him a fair place at her banquet board, but he had ignored the orderly progress of her courses and had tousled her table with an impatient and conscienceless hand. The book of life had been opened wide before him, but he had declined to make the usual advance that leads straight on from chapter to chapter; the rather had he fluttered the leaves carelessly, glanced at the end before reaching the middle, and thoroughly thwarted the aims and intentions of the great Author.

His thought reverted to the city — a city of mute Madonnas, and of vacuous altar-screens, and of cypressed hilltops all echoless. "No, there is nothing for me here. I shall go to Rome to-morrow and there make my final stand."

## III

And Rome had betrayed him. A single short week had served to make this cruelly plain. The city that had once rung in resonant unison with his whole being now gave out but the dull and shadowy sound of muted strings. The mighty capital that had been so reverberant in the days of his youth had naught but flatness and hollowness for his middle years. The mosaics said, "We have nothing to give to you;" the fountains said, "We have nothing to sing to you." The obelisks

pointed rigidly aloft toward empty space; the catacombs failed even to suggest reflections that might console one for the coming of the inevitable end. "'The Scipio's tomb'" — he began to murmur one day; "oh, even ashes were better than absolute nothingness!" The new Forum puzzled him; the despoiled villas enraged him; the carefully edited ruins of the Palatine — how far away those blessed Sunday afternoons upon the Septizonium! — filled him with an aching regret. The great Borghese Titian, which had once struck out so full and majestic an orchestral chord, seemed now no more than a simple, commonplace duet between French horns; while as for the Raphaels of the Farnesina — but he had not trusted himself to go and see them. He dragged his feet wearily through street and square and garden; but ennui yawned at him beneath the Mattei pines, and disappointment looked out at him with piteous apology from the eyes of prophets and sibyls. If by any chance he came to the point of actual enjoyment he would be made to feel all too plainly that his enjoyment was merely retrospective. "If this pleases me now," he would say, as he strolled through the Corsini gallery or lingered in the Medici garden, "that is only because it has pleased me before. Enjoyment of enjoyment past! I am living among shadows, and it is all too soon for that!"

Then heartache would peer at him grievously from the twilight dusk gathering under ilex trees, and disgust would cast her clammy mantle across

his protesting shoulders, and desperation would follow close behind him as he returned rapidly through the darkening streets to his cheerless and solitary lodgings. "Another day gone; another defeat endured," he would sigh.

"It is a rout," he finally declared. "I must rally my forces for a final stand. I will fall back upon the citadel itself. If the Pincian cannot save me, I am beyond the reach of aid."

Upon this promenade, so beautiful, so accessible, so inexhaustible (if used aright), so endeared by association, he planted his standard. The recollections of a long, full, happy winter, many years before, came flocking to reinforce him. There had been days for galleries and days for churches and days for ruins and days for the Campagna, but every day had been a day for the Pincian. There had been hours for vespers and hours for the bank and hours for social duties, but every hour had been an hour for the Pincian. The band might play or not; the carriages might circulate or not; the dawdling crowd might lounge or not; the robust and magnificent Roman nurses might bring hither their charges or not; the pallid, bare-legged little boys of the *fortunati* might sail their boats in the great fountain-basin or not; the spectacled students of the Collegium Germanicum might carry their red gowns past in solemn procession or not; some pudgy little compatriot, with her plan spread out upon the balustrade of the great terrace's central projection, might be

thwarted by the approach of nightfall in her solution of some deep topographical puzzle or not; still the lovely garden, so open, so serene, so simple, so dowered with spacious vistas, was always there, and always radiant with a gracious welcome.

There was some choice in the matter of approach, too, and these opportunities for variation he had elaborated with painstaking care. To-day he would climb the face of the hill from the fountain in the piazza at its foot — mounting aloft, terrace after terrace, past niche and parapet all nobly set with sculptured groups and trophied columns, through steep plantations of cypress and carob and laurel and many other growths whose namelessness (for him) was more than made good by their grace and fragrance. And the great cupola beyond Tiber would rise as he rose, disentangling itself from meaner monuments as readily as from the simple shrubs that hedged his pathway; and in the end the city would lie there map-like at his feet, while he and the One Dome were free to lord it jointly over all.

To-morrow he would gain the garden level at the beginning, and start from the head of the *scalone* that led up to the two-towered church, and would tread an airy half mile above the housetops. Here, too, there was variety and choice. When the acacia walk gave out, the ilex walk began; and rampe, terrace, and esplanade ever prompted the contriving of new modes of advance that might tax his ingenuity and satisfy his æsthetic sense.

Here he had the Dome from the start. Its buoyancy responded to his; its dignity answered back his seriousness. Its presence both expanded and ennobled him, and he felt, across the red reach of inexpressive roofs that filled in the valley between them, a high exchange of mutual understanding and respect. On these grave occasions, and on most others, he had been quite alone. Things were often more to him than men, and places more than personalities. He had been capable of almost any height of disinterestedness, of almost any aberration of abstractedness. He had lived in his own little world of ideas, in a fine non-human fashion; he had seldom felt the need of another's sympathetic participation in his moods, and would have made such a demand with some reluctance and with grave doubt of any satisfactory issue. But now, to-day? A mood had come that should, perhaps, have come before.

## IV

The Freiherr stood at bay on his Acropolis. His gods and temples were about him, and the enemy were in the full fury of their assault. Already he felt his own defeat. Even his divinities seemed to have deserted him. The Dome was turning upon him a leaden, lack-lustre look bereft of all sympathy and understanding; and the Garden — ah, surely the Garden was as a stranger! Nothing about it was right; everything about it

was wrong. Where was its tone, its harmony, its atmosphere? The band was playing — its music was vulgar; the water-clock was working — its activity was trivial; the children's swings were in movement within a certain secluded inclosure — such play was plebeian. The dwarf palms performed their office but stumpily, and the broken-nosed busts were more broken-nosed than ever. And the holiday throng he saw, at last, in the clear cold light of fact; whether on foot or on wheels, they were the deteriorating inhabitants of a deteriorating capital. In the old days every dowdy dowager in her landau had easily been a duchess, and every dandy lounging against the panel of her carriage door had been an attaché; his facile fancy had brought together the whole world of diplomacy and aristocracy and had made them hold high revels on that broad graveled eminence.

And to-day? To-day any possibility of illusion was past. He knew them all for what they were, and where he did not know he doubted and suspected and scorned and condemned. He turned his back upon those congested carriages and walked toward the edge of the terrace. This, then, was Rome. The city of his idealizing youth had vanished; the modern town, with all its drawbacks, difficulties, problems, disfigurements, sins of omission and commission, spread gray before him. The goblin of municipal folly rose on one side, and the spectre of parliamentary rascality on

the other. Sanctity, at the Vatican — away, now, with toe kissings and peacock fans and Easter blessings! — had descended into the grimy arena of present-day politics and was heading the rising hosts of an industrial democracy. Majesty, at the Quirinal — alas for the gallant day outside Porta Pia! — was smiling and bowing its propitiatory way through bazaars and hospitals from very fear of ceasing to be majesty at all. Gone was the dignity and the poetry of a great day. Gone for him was all hope of joy; gone the capacity for enjoyment along with his early years. He had made his last stand; he was defeated, routed. He must give up every idea of pushing further south — he was beyond the reach of human help.

Lamenting over the city, over the bygone years, over the loss of his own susceptibilities and enthusiasms, Theodor von Kaltenau repeated internally, with a deep bell-like intonation that seemed to sound the utmost luxury of woe, his final phrase, "Beyond all human help." The observation had cadence, pathos, intensity, and seemed an admirable instrument with which to plumb the abyss of self-pity on whose brink he was luxuriating. But with the third or fourth repetition he became conscious of a flaw. Human help, in fact, was the help, the one help, the only help, that he had not, thus far, invoked at all. He was too honest with himself to gloze this over; he felt, at once, that a last resort — untried, yet fairly promising — still remained.

"I see my way at last," he said. "Human help is exactly the kind of help I need, — but a very particular and especial variety of human help. I must bestir myself to find it."

## V

"It is quite plain," he reflected, as he passed down the face of the hill, "that my own youth is gone, and gone beyond recall. But youth still survives in others and must be made to lend itself to my necessities. I must search for the young heart, for the fresh eye, for the unjaded mind; for hope, for momentum; for nerves yet unblunted, for imagination yet untarnished. My search shall begin to-morrow. And if it fails, I return to Kaltenau forthwith. For Sicily were vain."

Straightway began the Freiherr's quest for the youth who was to repair the ravages of the flying years and work him his redemption. He coursed the town, just as the transported amateur ferrets out the darkest haunts of dealers in curios and antiquities. The theatres knew him, and the fox-hunts; the hotel-keepers and the bankers; the Forum and every public promenade. Many were called. He considered the tone of this instrument and the timbre of that; touch, quality, volume, responsiveness — all these had to be borne in mind. And finally one was chosen.

But not until the Freiherr had encountered

many trials and disappointments. One promising candidate went through the paces satisfactorily enough only to be rejected finally upon the Campidoglio: he refused to climb the tower of the Capitol. This was decisive for the Freiherr, who, inordinately fond of general views and prospects, insisted that his associate should fully share his taste. "How is Jeremiah to lament over the city," he asked his young companion, "unless he attains a point from which to overlook it?" — for he designed his lamentation to be thoroughly comprehensive, and to embrace the ancient city as well as the modern. To this the youth returned a look of uncomprehending inquiry. "He will not do," decided the Freiherr; "he needs to have things explained. His wits are as sluggish as his legs." And the search went on.

Another candidate — the Freiherr first met him at his banker's — seemed possessed of a singularly alert and vivacious mind and of a tense-strung nervous organization to which physical fatigue was almost a stranger. But this young man came to grief in the gardens of the Villa Mattei, one of the Freiherr's own sanctuaries: he tweaked the nose of a statue and passed a jest upon it. The Freiherr was inexpressibly outraged. He could endure the whimsical, but could not tolerate the facetious, and he had no mercy for the wrong thing done in the wrong place. True, the statue was of no artistic value, and the offender himself came from a distant land where no statues are;

but the offense remained. "Could I endure to journey with an irreverent jester, with an uncivilized clown?" the Freiherr demanded within himself. "No." And the search went on.

A third candidate, one of the Freiherr's own compatriots, was admirable in the galleries; he had a great fondness for pictures and statues, and was a marvel in the sympathetic and enlightened comments he passed upon them. But there was one great drawback: he insisted upon an exact observance of the luncheon and dinner hour — an observance that was almost automatic. "This is quite wrong," sighed the Freiherr; "at his age I never cared when I ate or where I ate or whether I ate at all. What kind of enthusiasm is it that keeps an eye on the clock and a hand on the stomach? What sort of a companion would this young fellow be on the Campagna or among the Abruzzi? I dare not commit myself to him."

Still another youth, a singularly wholesome and ingenuous one, he encountered on the Campagna itself, one morning when the foxhounds met under the arches of the Aqua Claudia. "Ha!" said the Freiherr, eternally hopeful, "here is one who has a frank brow and the eyes of innocence indeed! He will have the responsive ring of a fine coin newly minted." But this promising youth, it developed, had brought his own land along with him, and his own land's atmosphere — an atmosphere that was a non-conductor of new ideas and an impediment to the passage of fresh

sensations. "He cannot serve me," said the Freiherr, with a true regret.

Many others did the Freiherr pass in review, like an absorbed amateur in the shop of a violin-maker. The instruments flew to his hand, for he was singularly successful in his addresses to younger men. He was gracious; he could still project himself frankly and unaffectedly; he could say in effect, or at least convey the impression by his manner: "You are almost as old as I;" and, again: "I am almost as young as you." Then he would weave the two declarations into one and wield them as an irresistible unity by which the disparity of years and experience was almost obliterated.

The concours went on, but without result. One candidate was bored by the opera. "Heavens! how could I have so misjudged!" exclaimed the Freiherr, and dropped the unfortunate at once. Another turned out to be an untamable sportsman. "What!" cried von Kaltenau, "must I endure the constant popping of the rifle all over Calabria, and have my trail through Sicily marked by the bloody little bodies of larks and hares?" A third soon declared himself for an inordinate pursuer of pretty faces. "A disturbing element, indeed," pronounced the Freiherr. "I hope, of course, that I can make due allowance for young blood;" — but young blood dropped serious engagements at the rustle of skirts, and was but too like to imperil many a high emprise at the behest of beauty.

Into this poetical form the Freiherr cast his decision and dropped the boy forthwith.

The quest had gone on for nearly a fortnight. "I shall be forty in little more than a week," he moaned. "The case is becoming serious. Where, where shall I turn to grasp a rescuing hand? One last resort remains: I will go into Society."

## VI

That evening he went to a ball given at a haughty, high-shouldered old palace in the Corso. A friend at court, a complaisant hostess, and a burnous loaned by an obliging painter all combined to make the move easy. The Freiherr was especially pleased with his costume. It seemed of itself to constitute one long step in his advance upon Arabian Sicily. Already his imagination began to play about Saracenic portals and panelings and to traffic with the great Frederick at Favara, earliest of cosmopolites.

The *androne* rang with sharp hoofs and reverberated with the clatter of pressing carriages. Guests in varied attire climbed the forked arms of the vast staircase. The Freiherr climbed with the rest and found the fête in full swing under the frescoed and stuccoed ceilings of half a dozen great saloons.

It was a fête like other fêtes, he found. He took up his discontented post behind a huge column of giallo antico and meditated upon the

hollowness of formal social pleasures. It was a company like other companies, he saw. There was the usual number of shy people in striking costumes, and the usual number of serious people in comic ones ; there were just so many ineffectives who could not keep within their parts, and just so many recalcitrants who would not — persons, these, who had objected to assuming the costume of any part whatever. There were those who kept up a brave pretense of novelty and of enjoyment, and there were those who had abjectly fallen into frank boredom. To but too many others, as well as to von Kaltenau, all this was plainly a twice-told tale.

"I shall leave early," he muttered.

At that very moment a new and striking figure came moving through the crowd. It was that of a young man who pushed his agile way between a Doge and an Egyptian priestess and advanced buoyantly in the costume of Bacchus. A panther skin hung over his shoulder ; a crown of ivy and of grape leaves was set lightly on his dark locks. His sandaled feet carried him over the mosaic pavement with an elastic grace, and the sweep of his garlanded thyrsus confidently commanded the room that his movements required. There was a careless smile on his lips, a sparkle of frank and enthusiastic enjoyment in his black eyes, an utter yet patrician abandon in his every step and gesture.

"I must know that boy before this hour to-morrow," the Freiherr declared to himself.

He heard a sigh at his elbow. An elderly man

gowned in black stood there beside him and looked at him with a rueful smile.

"Such audacities are not for us," murmured the dark shade, as his glance followed the passing wine-god. "Only the young can work these wonders."

Von Kaltenau was nettled; this stranger was ten years his senior, if a day. Was his own dread of the middle years but a mere attitude? He looked a second time at the indiscreet speaker.

A grave, gray-haired person with a sad face. Besides his long black gown, he wore a black cap of a formal legal cut. He bore a large wine-stain upon his cheek, and this, with the rest, declared him to be Dottore Balanzoni, of the Venetian comedy of masks. But never were mien and manner less the mien and manner of the comedian.

The Freiherr felt too much pity to feel offense. "Yes, only the young can work such wonders," he conceded. "Youth is the great magician and should be given full scope to perform its miracles. More, it should be provided with miracles to perform. Ay, and it shall be!" he added with a touch of passion.

Young Bacchus went lightly on his way. The eyes of the old lightened, and the eyes of the young flamed — save those that drooped before such daring.

Dottore Balanzoni sighed once more — a little breath that was not without its touch of pathos.

"You are unhappy," said von Kaltenau. "You are carrying that within you which were better given vent. Speak out."

The Freiherr smiled encouragingly upon his elderly companion. In some matters he was at the mercy of his own whims, and he could now and then feign such a sympathetic interest in the concerns of others as almost to deceive himself.

"You ask for the — the story of my life?" questioned the other, guardedly. It was apparent that any reserves existing might easily be removed.

"I am not entitled to ask so much," rejoined the Freiherr, quickly. He glanced out past his column and saw over the heads of the motley throng the thyrsus brandished beneath the lustre of the next saloon. "Nor could I wait to hear so much," he added to himself.

"You would be asking very little," returned the other. "The story of my life is a short one. For I have never lived — no, I have never lived at all."

The speaker paused after the enunciation of this sombre fact to note the effect it produced.

The Freiherr was indeed surprised. "And yet," he began, perplexedly, pushing back from his temples the camel's-hair cords that bound his haik, "you are — you are" —

"I am what you see me. I am a professor at home, and I am a professor abroad. I hold a chair in one of the great universities of the North, and

I bring my poor trade, as you see," — his hand brushed his gown as he spoke — "even into the halls of pleasure. I was a student from the beginning, and I have never been anything else."

The Freiherr bowed gravely. The bacchic pine-cone had vanished, but a shepherdess' crook, gilded and beribboned and held aloft over the heads of the crowd, was advancing from the other apartment. Presently the bearer passed — a shepherdess mature and experienced, but still a shepherdess.

"You mean" — began the Freiherr, looking at the diamond necklace that drooped upon the ample bosom of this figure à la Watteau, — "You mean that" —

"I mean that I am paying the price of pride — a pride all too stubborn, ill-judged, and confident. My pride took this form: I resolved early to conduct my life along a plane purely intellectual. My natural disposition made this easy — a disposition to find interest in ideas rather than in individuals. I ignored the personal element, and saw life as a mere set of cold abstractions. I thought that I was administering my natural forces, when, in truth, I was curbing them, thwarting them, numbing them, crushing them. This was a grave error, and I am hoping that I may yet rectify it. That is the purpose of my travels."

"You are from the North, you say?"

"Yes; and I am journeying toward the South — the South, where life had its birth and has reached its best developments. For, as I have told you, I

have never yet lived. I haughtily suppressed the just desires and the just demands of the physical man; I fear that I even ignored my natural indebtedness to my own parents."

"I *have* lived," murmured the Freiherr, — "irregularly. I was given a good seat at the feast of life, but I was impatient of order and restraint. I snatched here, I nibbled there; I disordered the table and came away unsatisfied."

"And I," said the other, "have sat at a bare board all my days."

"Yes, I have lived," repeated von Kaltenau, looking down at the mosaic garland upon which his red morocco toe was beating. "The book of life opened itself wide before me; but I rummaged it and rumpled it and took it in disconnected snatches" —

"While I," interrupted the other, "have merely looked at its covers."

"What are you meaning to do?"

"I will tell you. I am" —

Young Bacchus came returning through the room. But not alone. His steps were attending those of a tall young girl in white, who moved on with a stately grace, clad in a white peplum bordered with gold and violet. A Junonian coronet of brilliants sparkled on her black hair, but her face was turned away. The face of the young man, however, was in the fullest view. It had lost the possible shade of haughtiness that it had worn before, and as he eagerly bent forward in

step with his companion it expressed only boundless admiration and the desire to please — a smiling desire, but a very earnest one.

"I will tell you," repeated the Doctor out of Goldoni; and von Kaltenau felt constrained to bring back his wandering attention.

"There is a city," began Dottore Balanzoni, with some solemnity, "that sits beside the sea. The way is south, then westward over the water. It is the city of the senses. It is girdled by a sweep of rich fields, — the green and golden fields of oranges and myrtles. There is a bay bright in the sunlight and nobly tapestried round about with many blue mountains. And every height bears, I am told, some relic — whether of temple, church, or castle — commemorating those who, in past ages, have sought happiness near this favored spot. And above the last of these mountain heights there should rise one greater than all, a peak crowned at once with snow and with fire. This is the city where wrongs are made right, where errors are condoned and corrected, where omissions and shortcomings are made good, where satisfactions and felicities await the stout-hearted and the determined — perhaps even the timid and the piteous will be accorded welcome. This is the city I seek — if such there be; these are the objects I would attain — if such may there be reached. I have wandered far, and have little time to wander farther. I have endured many disappointments, and could scarcely endure an-

other. There, if anywhere, fate must be kind; there, if anywhere " —

He paused, with a tremor in his voice and a tear-drop in his eye. The two young Olympians had passed from sight, and the Freiherr again fixed his abashed and perturbed look upon the mosaic garland.

" Do I see my own future here?" he asked himself. " Never, — never, by my life! Some one, some one, shall save me from such an end!"

" There," resumed the other, " there, upon that city, my hopes are centred. For me" — he fixed the Freiherr with a tristful glance — " it is the Last Refuge."

The Freiherr mused: " A mountain of snow and of fire, you say? But may not one find it a mountain of snow and of — smoke?"

" Smoke?" repeated the other. " Such may be the case," he acknowledged gravely. " But all that," he added with an uncertain smile, as he lapsed into the dog-Latin proper to his part, " is on the knees of the gods."

## VII

The guests had begun to leave. Doges more than one had gathered up their trains and senators more than one their togas; the Watteau shepherdess stepped majestically down the great stairway; and over the topmost balustrade young Bacchus leaned to set the aureole of his adieu

upon a descending head whose midnight hair was already crowned with stars.

"The hour is late for an aging person like me," observed the Freiherr; "I will go, too." And he gathered up the folds of his white woolen burnous and took his leave.

Within the space of time that he had set he met the ivied young divinity of the Palazzo Astrofiammante, and had begun to apply his various touchstones to this newest candidate, with the highest hopes for final success.

Bruno de' Brunelli — such was the young man's name — was a native of Illyrian Zara, and had but lately left his province for the first time. His father had been the cadet of a collateral line of an ancient Italian house whose seat was in the far south, and his mother was the daughter of a Slavic chieftain who, in earlier days, had ruled his little clan settled in one of the valleys under Mount Dormitor, the mighty mass that throws its great shadow alike over the boundaries of Montenegro and of Herzegovina. He had lived the most of his twenty-three years in the old gothic palace at Zara, and now had issued thence to cross the Adriatic and to see the world.

Youthful, alert, generous, gallant, enthusiastic, whole-hearted, he came into the Freiherr's hands as might have come a shining silver disk. Von Kaltenau received the offering with a due regard for its value, and propped it on three fingers, and strained a critical ear as he struck its edge again

and again with the knuckles of his closed hand. The disk rang melodiously and always true. To this young Illyrian everything was new, fresh, vital; everything was a target for the impetuous rush of his eager senses. Rome shook off its dust, rose from its ashes. The world was reborn — or seemed about to be.

The Freiherr applied all his little tests; Bruno stood every one of them. Other young men had been indolent, or irreverent, or self-indulgent, or narrow and stolid, or selfishly cruel, or over-susceptible. Bruno, thus far, seemed to be none of these. As for the range of his sympathies, that was soon seen to be boundless. He liked ruins — a happy day at Ostia showed this. He liked idyllic landscape — an enchanting afternoon at Nemi manifested that. He rose buoyantly to Guido's Aurora, making that time-dimmed and all too familiar masterpiece once more resplendent in the Freiherr's eyes; and he paid such ardent homage to the Barberini Juno of the Sala Rotonda that neither he nor his companion had eye or thought for the bacchic Antinous in the opposite niche. He liked mediæval frescoes in underground churches, and carried a willing candle with the rest on one of the open days at San Clemente; he liked catacombs, and almost vivified the dry bones of S. Agnese Fuori by the poignancy of his interest. He reveled in gardens — nothing pleased him more than to lie at ease under the stone pines of the Villa Borghese, or to pat the mossy balustrades

of the Villa Panfili. This last touch gave the Freiherr immense pleasure. "He does it just as I myself once did it. This is more — much more — than I have any right to ask!"

One point remained unsettled: the young man's religion. The Freiherr took him to high mass at the Lateran. Bruno carried himself with such discretion and participated in the function with such a practised precision that the question was answered. Von Kaltenau, himself palely Lutheran, would have liked from his companion the profession of a religion still more rich and alien and exotic. In his private thoughts he united Bruno to the Greek faith, and in his mind's eye he saw the young man at his devotions before a richly gilded Byzantine screen, adoring icons on bended knee and touching a humble forehead to the ground. But he waived the point — the picture faded. "I must not expect everything," he acknowledged; "I have more now than I could have dared to dream of."

One final test remained, and the Freiherr, after a few days' delay, ventured to apply it. He took Bruno to see an operetta. "If he only behaves as he should" —

Bruno was perfect. He applauded the soprano no more than he applauded the tenor. He encouraged the young women of the chorus in no greater degree than he encouraged the middle-aged men of the orchestra.

"My last apprehension is laid," declared the

gratified Freiherr; "no matter of the heart is likely to interfere. Yes, he shall go with me to Sicily."

## VIII

Von Kaltenau was flooded by a deep sense of gratitude. To this young prodigy, who was brushing away his cobwebs, airing his musty chambers, and polishing his dingy panes, he felt he owed some act of formal homage. He ransacked the whole Balkan peninsula in his effort to confer upon Bruno some suitable style and title. With the chieftain of the early years of the century in mind, he hailed his latest descendant as voivode, starshina hospodar, — titles whose precise value he knew none too well. Possessed of the name of the district over which the stern old chief had held sway, he hailed young Bruno as Glavar of Tzermitna and mentally made prostrations before him.

Bruno showed neither pleasure nor displeasure at these ascriptions. He took each one of them with a simple seriousness that perplexed the Freiherr and finally nettled him. "What!" he exclaimed; "have I found a flaw, after all? Is the boy vain? Can he be influenced by mere crude flattery? Is he not simple enough to bear the pride of lineage with an easier grace? When all's said, can his rank be higher than my own?"

Despite this dissatisfaction, he pressed the Sicilian journey. But the point needed no pressing;

Bruno's face was already set unmistakably toward the south. "Surely, if we are both going, we should go together," said von Kaltenau to him one day. "Subjects of a common sovereign, to whom we owe a like allegiance, what is fitter than that we should bear each other company?"

Though the Freiherr made this advance in his most gracious manner, young Bruno gave him but a doubtful look in response. "Ha!" thought the Freiherr. "The bond that holds our heterogeneous empire together is none too strong, truly; but I had not looked to find lukewarmness here, least of all disloyalty." And he asked Bruno what he was to understand.

Bruno gave him a straightforward and unaffected answer. He did not know where his allegiance was rightly due. He was an Austrian to-day, but he might be an Italian to-morrow. Rumors of a Sicilian dukedom in need of an heir had lately reached the Illyrian coast, and to his, the remotest branch of the great house, had come letters of inquiry after a fruitless search in every other quarter. "The succession may have failed," he said; "or there may be none to fail. It may be a dukedom or it may be less. I may be the heir, or there may be no heir at all. I go southward to learn what I may."

His rehabilitation in the Freiherr's eyes was complete, and his personality ten times more interesting than before.

"There will be a dukedom for you," cried von

Kaltenau, "or we will make you one!" A promise kept to the letter — almost.

As they stood there together in the big central recess of the mid-Pincian's front, young Bruno looked the flower of nobility indeed, and the Freiherr, close by his side, could not but wish himself a shade less stout and a shade more carefully dressed. The boy's slender elegance was wrapped up in a black frock-coat, the masterpiece of some tailor triumphant; every gesture was full of an easy, unstudied grace; and when he saluted some passing carriage his fine dark hair, whose growth was smooth and straight in its beginnings, but rather curly and flaunting at the finish, showed at the back and above the ears the print of his hat — as if a fillet (from the antique) had just been removed. But there were few to whom he bowed. "Good," said the Freiherr; "the fewer he knows, the better."

All was now agreed upon, and nothing remained but to ratify the pact. "You promise me, then?" demanded the Freiherr. "Your eyes shall be my eyes; your senses shall be my senses. And as you have given me a new Rome, so you will give me a new world. You promise?"

"I promise," replied Bruno. And they struck hands upon it.

## IX

An instant later, the young man, glancing over his shoulder, had withdrawn his hand, lifted his

hat, and made an involuntary start, as if to leave the Freiherr and to cross the fifty-foot stretch of smooth gravel that lay between them and a carriage halted in the shade of an ilex-tree. The Freiherr, looking after Bruno, saw three persons get into the carriage and resume their drive round the ring. Two of them were elderly, and one of them was young. The two elders appeared to be rather severe and difficult; the male member of the pair, who was carried away with his back toward the coachman and his face toward our two friends, gave Bruno a look of the most sour and discouraging character. Their young companion, a girl beautiful to the most careless eye, looked straight ahead, though her position on the near side of the carriage would have made a salutation easy, and might have been held (even by a youth less eager than Bruno) to make it almost inevitable.

"Ah! there she is! there she is!" he cried, with a second start, as if the carriage were a practicable object of pursuit.

"Who?" asked von Kaltenau, severely.

"Ah! there is Donna Violante, there is Donna Violante!" proceeded Bruno, intent rather upon expressing himself than upon replying to his companion's inquiry. He put his hand stiffly behind his back, as if to make the waving of it impossible. "She saw me, she saw me! And she will see me when she passes by again!" He took up a new position, as if in anticipation of the carriage on its next round. "She is one of the Astrofiammanti,"

he went on, in more definite response to the Freiherr's question; "a distant cousin — one of the remote Sicilian branch. She is here for a month with her parents — curse them!" he concluded darkly.

But his frown soon passed. "Tell me, is n't she the most beautiful, the most exquisite creature you ever saw?"

"She seemed very pretty and pleasant and tastefully dressed, as nearly as I might judge from a mere glance — and a distant one, at that." The Freiherr felt he had said all that civility required, or that appreciation — his appreciation — could justify.

"Ha!" cried Bruno, with a vibrant note of indignation. "Can you say no more than that? Let me tell you, then: she is not pretty; she is not pleasant — unless she wants to be; she is not tastefully dressed, nor was she ever nor will she ever be save when dressed for what she is, a goddess. Come!" He caught the Freiherr by the arm, dragging him away from the parapet, and pointing toward the row of stone stumps that set definite bounds to the course for carriages; "come; stand with me there, and look again when next she passes. You ask for my eyes? Take them!" — with a gesture as if to pluck them from his face — "and let them serve to show you how her lips may smile. My ears? Take them, and listen — should good luck but befriend you — to the music of her voice. You shall have my very heart-strings, at need, before such a paragon shall go

unappreciated. You saw her eyes, her profile, her walk, and yet you" —

The Freiherr stopped him. "Oh, this," he moaned to himself, "why, this is worse than my worst imaginings!" Then, —

"Where did you meet her?" he asked.

"At the Astrofiammante ball. I first saw her as she was coming up the stairway. Had you but noticed her there! She had the beauty of a goddess, and the dress, and the carriage, too!"

"The dress?"

"She wore a Greek peplum; her black hair was knotted at the nape of her neck; on her forehead shone a coronet of stars" —

"I remember," said the Freiherr faintly. "I —I saw her."

"You saw her! And yet you" —

"I saw her back, I mean. And later on I saw the top of her head," the Freiherr acknowledged spiritlessly.

"Then come; stand here. And you shall presently see her face to face. Look; there is the carriage now. In a moment more it will make that turn, and" —

The carriage made its turn, but it was a turn in the opposite direction. There was a distant glitter of spokes and panels, and Donna Violante's parents rolled off the grounds and carried their daughter with them.

## X

"I have his promise," reflected the Freiherr, pondering over the twist affairs had taken; "but can I expect him to keep it? Will he leave Rome while she is here? Can I press my interests if his own become as engrossing as they threaten to? And yet must I be disappointed in the end, and reconcile myself to see the labors of a busy month result in nothing? Pray heaven some further turn of the wheel may come to favor me!"

He was under a new dispensation indeed. Bruno, whom he had been seeing every day, now appeared but twice or thrice in the week. The galleries and museums knew him no more; engagements that led toward Tivoli or Frascati were broken without compunction. Instead, Bruno haunted the Pincian — at the most likely hours; and strolled up and down the Corso, lounging slowly past the shop-fronts; and often went far out of his way to walk through the Longara, beyond Tiber, where Donna Violante and her parents were lodged in a dismal old palace. He came to know the quarterings on many carriages, and the favorite shops of the ladies of the aristocracy, and the physiognomy of the old palace beyond Tiber, down to the last grille and pediment. But his suit made little progress. Frowns doubled, for the mother's were added to the father's, and Donna Violante seemed to have withdrawn — or

to have been withdrawn — into complete inaccessibility. But he persisted. One day he passed their carriage in the Corso. The double frown was blacker than ever, but Donna Violante contrived to convey a secret signal of encouragement. That night found him beneath her window. He spoke; she listened and responded. All at once she was pulled away from the window, her light was extinguished, and her blinds were closed. Debarred here, he still persisted elsewhere, and finally his persistence brought its punishment.

After an absence of three days, he burst, one afternoon, into the Freiherr's apartment.

"They have carried her off to Naples!" he cried.

"Ah!" thought the Freiherr, "my turn in the wheel has come!"

Then he smiled upon the flushed and panting Bruno. "We will leave for Naples to-morrow morning," he said.

## PART II. — IN PURSUIT

### I

THE hills shifted by, rapidly, regularly, and the hill towns with them. Bruno thrust forth his head to count off the flag-men who came forward, each from his little house, at the completion of every kilometre; and the Freiherr, throwing back longing glances at Palestrina and Anagni and Ferentino and Frosinone, began to wonder if he had anticipated the full torment of traveling with a young man deep in love.

He had designed this passage through the valley of Sacco to be an experience as precious as ample leisure and sympathetic interpretation could make it. A trusty vetturino should guide them slowly from town to town, and the illuminative commentaries of Bruno de' Brunelli should confirm to him all that his own delays and the lapse of years had jeoparded. Who better could guide him through savage Palestrina, a town founded upon the ruins of a Roman temple, than he whose boyhood had been passed in part at Illyrian Spalato, a town built within the ruins of a Roman palace? What better commentary upon the immemorial walls of Segni and of Ferentino than that to be

furnished by the fresh eye and avid mind of enthusiastic youth? What better complement to the rugged mountains of the Hernici than the ever-present image of the suave shores of the Adriatic? Vain hopes! The guide so carefully chosen, so fully depended upon, was propelled by love, straight and swift as from a catapult, toward Parthenope. Bruno had made it plain that delay could not be heard of, nor let or hindrance endured. Yet delay came, after all, and hindrance had to be endured with such good grace as he could command.

At Borgo San Cipriano, about the middle of the afternoon, there was a delay. The delay lengthened, and presently the reason for it transpired — in the leisurely Italian fashion: the Giglio, under the impetus of heavy rains among the Apennines, had risen between its banks and wrought all havoc possible for so mild-mannered a stream. The bridge just ahead had been weakened to such an extent that the labor of several hours would be required before a crossing could be made in safety. And as for the bridge over the highway, a few hundred yards above, that had been carried away completely; a half-demolished stone pier stood in mid-stream, and débris crushed impartially the alder bushes of both banks for many a rood.

Bruno fretted, fumed, raged. But the Freiherr said to himself, "We shall have one delay, at least!" and he suggested that they get out, put their luggage into safe-keeping and see the town.

It was evident from the start that Borgo San Cipriano was far removed to-day from its normal state of complete placidity. "And who can wonder?" asked Bruno, energetically; "with both its bridges down and its people shut off from all the world!"

"From half the world," the Freiherr amended mildly.

"From all the world," repeated Bruno, with a brusque insistency; "at least so far as I am concerned."

But Borgo San Cipriano took its shattered bridges very calmly; something more important than this double catastrophe was filling the mind of the town. What this something was they first learned from a placard displayed on the front of the town-hall (and subsequently met with at many other points), announcing the performance, on that very evening — "Oh! bless the broken bridge!" ejaculated the Freiherr — the performance, on that very evening, at the new Teatro Comunale, of the great masterpiece of the illustrious maestro the immortal Verdi, entitled, I DUE FOSCARI!!

The pink sheet fluttered in the wind before the Freiherr's dancing eyes, and the big black letters, as they went down the sheet line by line, seemed to grow bigger and blacker and richer in promise. "New scenery, especially painted;" — "a prima donna expressly from Naples;" — "début of our own new local tenor;" — "a chorus of" — an almost fabulous number of voices, from the point of

view of the impassioned impresario; — "an orchestra composed of twenty-two eminent professors" — "They are always 'professors'!" exclaimed the Freiherr, delightedly; "and always 'eminent'!"

He placed his hand upon his young companion's shoulder. "My dear Bruno, it is fate that has guided us hither; and here, until to-morrow, we must remain. Your bridge will never be repaired on time, and even if it were, I should not dare to cross it in the dark. No, no; don't frown! Just think! — 'I Due Foscari,' the one masterpiece of the immortal Verdi that I have never heard. Neither have you, I venture to wager. Now have you?"

"No," replied Bruno, reluctantly.

"And just pause to realize what this performance means. The whole province is interested — it always is. The provincial nobility will come flocking in from Sora and Ferentino and Arpino — why, it will be the sight of a lifetime!"

"How will they get here?" asked Bruno, contentiously. "The bridges are down."

"What are bridges," cried the Freiherr, "when an opera is involved? There are other bridges; there are boats; they will get here, somehow. Come, now, my dear fellow; I have hurried along for you, and now you should linger a little for me. What do you say?"

"You are right," returned Bruno, after a moment's thought. "We will stay."

This magnanimity was irresistible.

"You are all I thought to find you," cried the Freiherr, gratefully. "We shall not regret the stoppage."

## II

But even "I Due Foscari" and the Giglio's havoc, they presently perceived, did not exhaust the interests now agitating the town; they soon learned that the assistance of the provincial nobility might be augmented by the presence of a conspicuous figure from the great world outside. For, as they continued their stroll through the town, they came upon, in its principal street, a train of coaches and a throng of attendants grouped before the door of the principal inn. A crowd of curious townspeople were collected round one coach larger and more sumptuous than the others, and our two young men, catching sight of a face through the window, perceived at once that they were in the presence of a grande dame upon her progress.

"Poor lady," said the Freiherr, with ready sympathy; "she has been caught by one bridge just as we have been caught by the other."

The consciousness of common misfortune quickly brushes ceremony aside, and the further consciousness that one is not wholly unfamiliar with the other's face leads swiftly to speech.

"Madam," said the Freiherr, pushing through the crowd of gaping countrymen, "it is evident that we are involved in a common catastrophe."

The lady bowed graciously through the open

window. She looked at him with much directness and composure, and met his advances unaffectedly and with no loss of time.

"A catastrophe less serious, perhaps, for me, sir, than for you. For I am now engaged in correcting the defects of my early training — I am systematically combating the idea of the importance of time. There is another wagon bridge five miles above, I learn; but I shall be in no haste to take it."

"You are traveling as I should have liked to travel," sighed the Freiherr.

"You pass the night here, then?" asked Bruno, emboldened on his part, too, by a consciousness of having seen the lady's face before.

"Yes. My courier and my maids are now inside," — she waved her hand backward toward the opposite window and the inn door, — "trying to arrange accommodations for me."

"Your courier?" repeated von Kaltenau, involuntarily.

"Yes. Despite the fact that we seem — and indeed, are — a large party, I have the company of no men save those whose services are paid for. When I travel, I leave my male relatives at home — it is the custom of my country."

"Ah!" murmured Bruno.

"I suppose," the lady went on, "that, in your eyes, I may seem somewhat detached. Yet I am not altogether without domestic ties: I have a husband and three grown sons."

"And they," inquired the Freiherr, "they are at" —

"Yes, they are at home, following their respective industries, while their wife and mother pursues her travels abroad, with the aim of a general expanding and uplifting. Incidentally, I explain the customs of my country and expatiate upon the peculiarities of the national temperament."

"Most interesting, most unusual!" murmured Bruno.

"But you are standing. Pray sit on my carriage-step — one of you, at least. The other shall have a chair. Pietro! Cesare! will nobody" —

"Never mind, madam," said Bruno, motioning von Kaltenau toward the step; "I can stand with perfect ease."

The lady scrutinized the two young men carefully. "I am sure you do not understand me even yet," she said. "But you shall. Drive some of these annoying country-folk away, and then, to beguile the tedium of the hours, I will relate to you the story of my life."

"That will be charming indeed," declared the Freiherr.

The crowd now thinned, and the occupant of the coach, abating no jot in her majestic port, began her recital.

## III

"I am a Lady of Quality.

"Though born in a remote and unimportant quarter of the globe, I was conscious of my quality almost from the start — I enjoyed an intuitive sense of it.

"The town where I first saw the light of day was very new and very small, and not, from any point of view, particularly choice. The population, almost exclusively male, had its peculiarities. Most of the men wore their trousers in their boots and carried their pistols in their trousers. Others wore feathers in their hair, and others still wore their hair itself in queues."

"Delightful!" interjected the Freiherr.

"I will waste no further words upon my native town," pursued the Lady of Quality. "I soon came to feel it no place for such as I, and at seventeen I left it never to return.

"I set my face eastward, and having traversed an interval of many hundred miles, I reached a town that represented the best I then knew, and realized the highest ideals I had been able, thus far, to form. But I soon exhausted the educational and social possibilities of this frontier community, — it was really little more, — and moved on, still eastward, to a vast city built in a swamp and composed of many towering steel cages. Here I married; here worldly prosperity first overtook

me, and here I came to feel still more strongly the stirring of ambition for better things, — an ambition that has ever been my propelling power, and has, indeed, brought me where you meet me to-day.

"As I say, we prospered there; we came to own two or three of the steel cages, and own them yet. But mere material success was not enough — there are other needs that one must meet and other ambitions that one must gratify. Your seat is comfortable?" — to the Freiherr.

"Perfectly," he responded. "Pray proceed."

"Rumors reached me of another city, larger and grander still, that rose a thousand miles eastward upon the borders of the sea, — a city where social eminence were worth its cost indeed! I journeyed to that city and took my family with me. They are there now."

"The husband?"

"Yes."

"And the three sons?"

"Two of them. The third" —

"The third?"

"He has gone back to my birthplace" —

"Ah, filial devotion!"

— "which is now quite other than it was" —

"C'est dommage!"

— "and there he is sole owner of a mountain of gold" —

"Ah, ciel!"

— "which will soon enable his wife to live as I

am living now. But let me move on with my narrative. My eyes had been turned eastward so long that I found it impossible to turn them in any other direction. But, in truth, many of the eyes in this city by the sea had the same slant. We all looked eastward together. We looked across the sea toward the capital of a great empire, where an aristocracy and a court were in full operation, and where, as it was said, a warm welcome awaited those from my quarter of the world. It was but a matter of five days upon a very comfortable ship, and I took the journey."

"Alone? Without your family?"

"Without my family. I was outgrowing them and felt that a separation must come sooner or later. It came just here. Do you know London?"

"Alas, no," replied the Freiherr.

"You have lost less than you imagine. I found the aristocracy in trade. Some of them sold wines; others of them made bonnets. Half of the boxes at the opera were owned by Hebrew bankers and Australian sheep-breeders, and South African diamond-miners, and wealthy compatriots of my own. I was far from pleased. I saw that London would not do."

"A most shocking situation," observed Bruno.

"I heard of Vienna, where a real and exclusive aristocracy was said still to exist. I packed my boxes and — I am not wearying you?"

"Please go on," begged the Freiherr; "we have all the time in the world."

"I found Vienna much better. Sixteen quarterings were none too many, and access to court depended upon something more than the complaisance of a weak-kneed ambassador."

"Thank you," said the Freiherr von Kaltenau, impressively. "Your observation is very just."

"I found the Viennese nobility," she went on carefully, "exclusive enough in point of character, but not remote enough in point of origin. When they told me of Rome, with families going back to the earliest Consuls, I felt that I must make one more move. It is with society just as it is with banks and beliefs and beverages — the best is none too good."

"True."

"Rome received me, and satisfied me. I think the most magnificent entertainment I ever attended in my life" —

"Madam!" cried the two men together.

"Gentlemen!" cried the lady in return.

"We saw you there!"

"And I saw both of you!"

"You wore a petticoat of quilted blue satin!" cried Bruno, glad to appease his heart-hunger by reverting to the ball where he had first seen Donna Violante.

"And carried a gilded crook tied with a blue satin ribbon," contributed the Freiherr.

"And wore a diamond necklace of many strands upon" —

"You remember me, indeed. Yes, I appeared

as a mere shepherdess — and pray why should not the great be simple? What could be more simple, more primitive, I might say, than my present mode of travel? What value has time? What charm has pomp? I am resolved to reconquer leisure and simplicity together."

"But Rome," the Freiherr reminded her.

"The rage for perfection came upon me; the momentum gathered by long-continued motion was too strong to be withstood. Word came to me of some Sicilian city where a strain older than that of the oldest Roman blood yet lingered; a city whose palaces reflect the immemorial East upon their fronts and even in their names; a city that mingles with the strain of the primeval and mysterious Orient the blood of the Norman race that has imposed itself as an aristocracy upon every people with which it has come in contact. This city is my goal. There I shall be satisfied at last. Time is flying, the years are accumulating upon me, the sea begins to set its limitations, the range over which a lone woman may pursue her solitary way with safety has been almost covered; and within this city, if anywhere, my ambitions must be appeased. For me," she ended, with a tone of blended hope and fear, "it is the Last Refuge."

The two young men bowed gravely in response to this gallant peroration, and the Freiherr recalled the nebulous ideals and ambitions of the grave doctor of laws whom he had encountered upon his first and last incursion into Roman society.

"Ah, madam," he said, "your hopes, too, turn upon the Sicilians. Then there is one here," he continued, gathering Bruno's elbow into his curved palm, "whom you must know better. For this young man is going to meet the Sicilian aristocracy and to claim a dukedom among them."

The lady stared at Bruno and her lips moved, but no word came. She rose from her seat, and the Freiherr, guessing her wish to descend, moved from his place. The lady got out and looked at Bruno once more, but still in silence. Then she murmured, "Oh, sir — sir" — but could go no further. Then she caught her skirts up in both hands and made him a stately courtesy in the dust of the road.

## IV

An acquaintance so formed could not but continue; in the evening the Lady of Quality accompanied Bruno and the Freiherr to the opera. She announced shyly, on the way to the theatre, that she was expecting to meet in Sicily a niece who had married there into the nobility — or, no, not a niece (though the girl had always called her aunt), but, rather, the daughter of one of her oldest friends. This established a still closer *rapprochement* and did much to add to the general good feeling all round.

The theatre was a compact little place, done in blue and gold. It was opened to-night for the first time and seemed just come, not so much from

the hands of the builders as from the brain of the architect. Some fifty boxes were disposed in three tiers; and at the proper moment a lustre set with hundreds of lighted candles was lowered from the dome in the ceiling and made a sensation. The provincial nobility had rallied in a body, attired as seemed fitting in their eyes, and four or five sub-officers, from some minor garrison town near by, came to embellish the pit.

Our three amateurs secured a box (the last left) in the middle tier, well round toward the stage, and spent a spare five minutes in a survey of the house and of the gathering orchestra. The "professors" included a bullet-headed little boy of fourteen, who was presently to work wonders on the 'cello; and a young girl but little older, with her brown hair hanging down her back, sat at the same violin-desk with her grandfather, and moved her bow in unison with his.

The chorus, when it came, presented equal points of interest. A dozen lusty young fellows made the place ring, with no apparent exertion, and the ladies of the Venetian aristocracy were impersonated by nine stout, rosy-cheeked young country wenches, who stood stolidly in one stiff, straight row and sang in an unshaded fortissimo throughout.

The Lady of Quality, after a cursory survey of the boxes, determined to subordinate the social interest to the human. She seemed prepared to meet the crudity of things half way, and to be

willing to enjoy the performers as human beings, if not as artists.

The tenor, a plump and gentlemanly man of thirty, freshly shaved and pomaded, was the first of the principals to ask the favor of the house. It was easily seen that he had spent some hesitating years in the ranks of the amateurs; he felt his way carefully through his number, and did neither well nor ill. But a single false note near the end gave his enemies their chance, and three or four voices in different parts of the house mimicked it at once.

Young Bruno was instantly angry. He had a gallant sense of fair play, and was for springing to his feet and letting the cowards know what he thought of them. This impulsive act charmed the Freiherr, who himself was far beyond all capacity for indignation, and indeed considered that fact to be the gravest symptom of his case. He restrained the young fellow, reminding him that they were now nearing the irrepressible South, where to feel and to utter were one, and hoping, privately, that this reason might be sufficient to excuse the cruelty.

Bruno docilely accepted the Freiherr's philosophizing, and grew calm; but he still kept a stern eye upon a dark young man of twenty-eight or thirty who lounged in the first row of the *posti distinti*, and whose every action seemed to proclaim him the disgruntled subscriber. He was additionally conspicuous from being the only man in the

house who wore evening dress, and his audible observations had already begun to accompany the performance like a kind of burden. His burden changed — and for the better — upon the entrance of the elder Foscari, and the threatened hostilities were deferred. But he still scowled, now and then, at the Freiherr's party, as if inflamed by some special grievance — and, indeed, von Kaltenau had cut in and deprived him of the last available box.

The elder Foscari came on, of course, in the full regalia of the doge. But neither his white beard nor the voluminous garments of crimson velvet and — ermine? — yes, ermine, that draped his tall figure, could disguise the fact that he was several years younger than his son, though infinitely more experienced on the stage; and his heavy voice, too, when he came to sing, was full of the raw fervor of youth. But he found favor in the eyes of the exacting amateur in the front row, who hummed snatches of his air quite audibly — a little freedom that came to be rather general as the evening wore on, and as the house entered more deeply into the spirit of the occasion.

Bruno let him hum; the truce remained unbroken. For the costume of the basso had sent the young man's thoughts back to Rome. This doge made him think of the other doges at that ball, and the ball made him think of Donna Violante, and Donna Violante made him think of Naples, and Naples recalled the broken bridge and the delayed journey, and —

But the entrance of the soprano was a call to arms; Bruno was to break a lance in her behalf. For the important patron in the front row lost all self-control upon the appearance of the prima donna. The rivalries and dissatisfactions and heart-burnings of opposing factions came cropping out. The local Mæcenas — so our friends called him, though he was by no means without the metropolitan air — twisted about in his place and openly vented groans and even observations more articulate. Bruno sprang to the front of his box to protest and to reply, and the aria went on during an animated colloquy between the two champions on the propriety of the selection of such an opera, on the quality of the execution, and on the treatment due an artist and a woman. The house in general sat passive; such tilts were to be taken as a matter of course.

But the soprano really needed no champion. She was strong enough to stand alone — a veritable tower of strength. Ignoring all interruptions, she stood beside the prompter's box and opened her big wide throat and threw out her big coarse arms, and set her foot upon the house. She ignored the prompter, too. With his hands flapping to either side of his shell, and his voice audible to half the audience, he kept a full bar ahead of the text, and was never once overtaken during the evening. But the woman soon made it plain that she, the "prima donna napoletana," she, and none other, was the prop and mainstay of the per-

formance. She went through her part with the remorseless and resistless competence of a buzz-saw going through a log of wood, — this was the Freiherr's comparison, drawn from his Tyrolean forests, — and she carried the whole troupe with her. Before the end of the first act she was an enthroned favorite, and her chief antagonist was silenced. She rallied the orchestra; she steadied the male chorus — not the female, which stood like the pillars at Pæstum; and it became apparent that the "furore" all so ardently desired might easily come to pass.

In the second act a new group of characters was introduced. This consisted of a heavy table of antique oak and two attendant gothic chairs. They persisted through several scenes, indoor and out; they figured in the Ducal palace, and in the square before it, and were finally removed from the cast and the stage only by *force majeure* in the persons of two self-conscious young fellows in green plush knee-breeches and white cotton stockings. The scenery, too, had shown some uncertainty — sylvan side scenes obtruding into gothic interiors, and the like; and it seemed merely a question of time when some *faux pas* greater than any other should bring the action to the verge of the ridiculous.

This happened at the end of the second act, when the halls of the Foscari were just about to witness the separation of the young husband and wife, and poor Jacopo's going to prison. The

furore was gathering headway; the girl and her grandfather were playing with the combined passion of age and of youth; the bullet-headed little boy was shifting his fingers quickly up and down the neck of his 'cello; the twenty members of the Venetian aristocracy were singing loudly against each other in two opposing rows; the soprano had just retired up with the idea of falling into the arms of a pair of ladies of honor — two of the stolid nine; the tenor had just come down to the footlights, with the idea of launching his last high notes at the lustre beneath the dome; and the fall of the curtain was imminent and obligatory; when all at once a flimsy drop, rudely caricaturing a well-known Venetian scene, came rustling down to anticipate the separation. The young wife swooned — behind the scenes — in the great hall of the Palazzo Foscari; while the young husband, far from being carried off to prison, found himself free and more or less alone in the Piazzetta, "fra Marco e Todaro."

The house might have laughed, but did not. The furore must and should ensue. The pit rose, the boxes acclaimed; the round-headed little 'cellist was seen to wipe his forehead, well pleased. The artists appeared and disappeared, and amidst the rising and falling of applause this question began to dawn, — Shall there be a repetition? Some said yes; others said no; for a powerful disaffected minority, that had favored another opera and other singers, still had much to forgive.

One faction cried, "Bis!" Another cried "Basta!" Finally the solicitous impresario appeared to learn, if possible, the pleasure of the house. The influential amateur of the front row sprang to his feet and waved his arms and objurgated the quality of the singing and ridiculed the clumsiness of the stage management. Bruno de' Brunelli, no whit abashed, leaned far out of his box, crying "Bravo!" incessantly, with his resonant young voice, and rallying the boxes against the opposite faction, whose stronghold seemed to be on the lower floor. The sudden and cruel separation of those two young people had touched a tender chord, and he was resolved that if separated they must be, their separation should take place once more, with the element of the ridiculous eliminated. The Lady of Quality supported him bravely. She shone forth in full humanness; mere gentility slipped from her as a garment. She clapped her plump hands, and waved her plump arms, and cried "Bravo!" or "Brava!" every other second. The manager stood beside the prompter's box, puzzled, undecided. . . .

## V

"We shall meet again, I trust," said the Freiherr.

"I shall hope to overtake you," replied the Lady of Quality, as the two handed her into her coach, next morning.

"It was a gallant struggle!" cried the Freiherr, with an admiring glance at Bruno.

"It was indeed!" acquiesced the lady, giving Bruno a like look through the coach window. "If ever I need a champion, young sir, may he be such a one as you!"

"That fellow!" cried the young man tossing his head, — "with those shifty eyes and that offensive black tuft under his moustache! I should like to meet him again, somewhere!" — a desire that was to be realized, and more than once.

Noon found our two friends at Naples, and the quest that had been interrupted in the Corso was resumed on the Chiaja. Blue Capri shimmered mistily through the trees of the Villa Nazionale, Vesuvius smoked away in its easy-going fashion, hope shone again in young Bruno's eye, and the abundant and irresponsible sunlight poured itself over the alluring lineaments of the Mother of Corruptions.

"Nothing in the world is more beautiful!" exclaimed Bruno. The Freiherr knew why it seemed so beautiful, and knew, too, why his young friend had found it so easy to feel and to disclose the beauty of Rome: she was here, as she had been there.

They advanced to the drive along the sea wall. The middle of the afternoon had come, and the first of the afternoon's carriages had already appeared.

"We will take our stand here," said Bruno;

"all Naples will be passing before us within the hour. If I do not see her here, I shall find means to see her elsewhere," he declared firmly.

A few feet from them, two men stood together, and yet apart, listening to the slow slapping of the waves against the front of the sea wall, and idle but for that. In age they seemed to be midway between von Kaltenau and his companion, and their aspect was that of two alien birds of passage, pausing for a moment in the course of an extended flight.

"I see," said the Freiherr, accosting them without any affectation of formality, — for under Bruno's tutelage his interest in his kind was reviving, — "that you, like ourselves, are strangers here and perhaps, like us, but just arrived."

"Precisely," replied the slighter of the two, with a ready vivacity. He flipped his hand across his yellow moustache with a carefully careless gesture, and made his blue eyes shine a willingness for further conversational commerce.

"We come from Rome," said the Freiherr.

"And we," rejoined the other, "come from much further north than Rome. Look at us and think of the gulf of Bothnia."

"And you mean, perhaps," ventured Bruno, addressing the fourth member of the group, "to go much further south than Naples?"

This person composed his uncouth features to a look by no means unfriendly, but made no definite response. His large hands writhed together

with some sense of mutual discomfort, and his whole rugged presence conveyed indications of an ethnological remoteness that spread almost to the pole. Though one of the pair was sprightly and the other heavy, though one was loquacious and the other taciturn, there was that in each which proclaimed that neither temperament was in the present enjoyment of satisfaction.

"Further south?" repeated the first of the pair. "Precisely so. We are on the way to Sicily."

"Naples, then," hazarded the Freiherr, "does not give you what you seek."

"Naples offers a great deal, but has not satisfied our needs. We have heard of a city to the south that is even more beautiful than this — a spot where nature is quite as gracious and man not quite so vile. We seek the free expansion of full meridional passion in its most favorable manifestations."

"Explain yourself," said his companion, seriously. "We shall be misunderstood."

"I have no desire to do you any injustice," the Freiherr hastened to say.

"Let me make plain to you the difficulties of our situation," said he of the blue eyes and blonde beard. His tone claimed a certain period to be devoted to exposition, and his eye seemed to rove about in search of a bench.

"Over there, by the palm-tree," suggested the Freiherr. They led the way across the carriage-drive, and the other two followed.

"My friend and I," the spokesman began, as the party took places on the bench, "find our bond of association in our very deficiencies, — our respective deficiencies, you understand. While we are both artists" —

Bruno looked at the fourth man in some surprise. "I need to be explained, I know," the uncouth creature acknowledged, with a gentle shyness.

"Yes, we are both artists," the other repeated; "each in his own way. One of us" — he touched his own breast — "is an artist in actuality; the other," — with a gesture toward his companion, — "only in desire. I am an artist in fact; my friend is one but in theory. I am a painter; he is a poet — in all save the faculty of expression."

"A pitiable deficiency," commented the Freiherr.

"I have never felt it more than here," said the shaggy person from the far North, as he embroiled his hands with each other once more and sent his helpless gaze roving over the beauties that encompassed them. "In truth, I was born under an evil star. I have never been able — this is my whole difficulty — to get outside of myself."

"Ah, to be born with a soul full of thoughts," his friend struck in quickly, as if with some æsthetic relish for such a plight, "and yet to live inarticulate! Think what it means! It is to be a sharp sword caught tight in a rusty scabbard! It is to be a windmill whose arms have not been unlocked to the play of the breeze! It is to be

caught living, breathing, sentient, in the vise of paralysis, with the brain tirelessly active, but the tongue thickened, the hand incapable of motion!"

"But you, I am sure, were not born under the ban of silence," said Bruno; and indeed the arms of the windmill seemed to have caught the breeze most successfully.

"No," was the answer, with a fine impersonal smile that showed a full appreciation of the sarcasm. "No; but my plight is fully as deplorable as my friend's, though just the opposite. He cannot get outside of himself; I cannot get inside of myself!" The speaker paused, with a look that seemed to ask, "What do you think of that, now?"

"Explain yourself," said the Freiherr.

"Willingly. As I have said, I am an artist — one of some reputation, too. But everything I have done has been quite objective — always from the outside. I begin to fear that my gift is a purely physical one — the quick eye, the sure hand. For I have never got into myself, nor into my subject. Objectivity, literalism, simple transcription. And is that enough? No. We are in a condition of mere detachment, my work and I alike. I look upon myself from without, as upon another being. I keep an impartial hand upon an impersonal pulse. I view my own postures — of mind or of body — as I might view those of any one else whomsoever. Praise of me or blame of me is no more to me than if bestowed else-

where. Even sarcasm" — with a sidelong glance at Bruno — "is a matter of pleasure or the reverse only in so far as it is launched with point and effect or no."

"I am sure" — began Bruno, in a tone of apology.

"What results?" the orator proceeded, rising from the bench and taking up something of an attitude before the remaining three. "I am in danger of being pronounced second-rate. What must I do? I see it with perfect clearness; — I must get within. The steam must be inside the boiler, the gas inside the balloon. Does the beast operate the treadmill by standing beside it? Can Samson bring down the house without getting beneath it? Can the" —

"What are your plans?" asked the Freiherr, gently but decisively.

"We are in search of a fuller and freer manifestation of life. We have set our hopes upon the abandon and momentum of the south. There is a city by the Sicilian sea, a city that will mark, we hope — or else we must despair — the utmost term of our journey. We look there for such a revelation of beauty and such a dispensation of freedom as shall correct all our temperamental shortcomings and free us from our respective limitations. We are not too rich, either in time or in money; we have left our families and friends behind; we cannot hope for an indefinitely continued propulsion toward our ideal. This city must satisfy us,

if satisfaction there is to be. We approach it with as much of dread as of hope, for if that fails all fails. To us it is the Last Refuge."

"Yes," echoed the other, solemnly, "it is the Last Refuge."

## VI

The poor fellow looked out with pathetic longing over the blue sea that was soon to bear him to his ultimate goal and that yet might never receive articulate expression of his delight and of his gratitude. Bruno, no longer mindful of his companions, began to send a roving eye after the multiplying carriages. The intangible predicament of these two Hyperborean pilgrims was trifling indeed when confronted by his own baffled desires. How find her? Whither fly with her? While he burned with thwarted passion they might thaw at their leisure.

"Nothing, as you may imagine," he presently heard the blue-eyed Northman saying to the Freiherr, "could have given us higher hopes, — nothing could have happened to make us surer that we were upon the right course at last. She came toward us rapidly, half walking, half running — we were standing not twenty yards from where you first saw us. She was the most glorious young woman — though, in truth, she seemed little more than a girl — that I have ever seen. Her long black hair was loosened and blew about in the breeze. Her beautiful dark eyes burned with

what seemed like indignation, and her lips and chin — a chin most firmly and exquisitely modelled — quivered with a passionate grief. 'O, daughter of the South!' I was about to cry — but could think of no suitable words to follow. Her carriage, as she came hastening toward the water, I have never seen surpassed. Agitated, impassioned, frenzied as she was, she neither walked nor ran — whatever I may have said; she glided — the true advance of a goddess. Behind her" —

Bruno turned and fixed his eye upon the speaker. Could there be two women who walked like that?

"Behind her, at some little distance, lagged an old crone, scuffling, panting, and crying as best she might: 'My child! my child! Stop, stop! What rash thing would you do? Stop, if you love me!' It was a rare and exquisite contrast. The situation held all the elements of a perfectly practicable picture. It was merely a question of drawing these elements close enough together." He collected the "elements" by an inward sweep of his two supple hands, and fixed their mass and outline upon an imaginary canvas.

"What was the girl — the woman meaning to do?" asked Bruno, disdaining any pause over a technician's special point of view.

"She was meaning to cast herself into the sea. She moved resolutely toward the edge of the quay and stood there a moment with extended arms. The background was perfect — three shades of

blue: the deep blue of the water — the waves were tossing just enough to give the right angle of reflection; the light blue of the sky — a shade or two lighter, in fact, than report had led us to anticipate; and the soft veiled blue of the Sorrentine mountains. The same blues, indeed, that you may observe for yourselves — for it all occurred less than half an hour ago, and the sun has moved but little since. The girl herself was dressed in blue — the deep, intense, passionate blue that is almost black, — the fathomless blue that holds infinite depths in reserve, — the blue that may give itself, and give and give, and yet remain the same blue to the end. It was a simple costume, but worn with the most supreme distinction. The poor child was evidently as high-placed as she was unhappy."

Bruno started, but dared not trust himself to speak.

"She gave a plaintive and passionate sob. 'Farewell, Sicily!' she said."

"Sicily!" gasped Bruno.

"'Farewell, Rome!'"

"Rome!"

"'Farewell, Illyria!'"

"Illyria!" Bruno turned white as a ghost and clutched the Freiherr's arm to hold himself erect.

"Meanwhile the old woman was scuffling into the picture as fast as she might." The painter hurried her in with one hand and secured his horizon by wielding an imaginary maulstick with

the other. "'My child!' she cried again; 'for the love of heaven pause where you are! Violante! Donna Violante!'" —

"What!" exclaimed Bruno, with a great roar of grief and rage, as he sprang forward and gripped the other by the throat. "And you, you coward, you futile wretch, you let her die before your eyes!"

The painter, half thrown off his feet by this sudden onslaught, and with his throat still in the barbaric grip of Bruno's hands, could express his astonishment and anger only by a wild rolling of the eyes.

"No," his friend answered for him, in a voice whose sympathetic tremor was shared by all the bulk of his body. "We saved her. We entered the picture, too, and snatched her back in time."

"And where is she? Where is my Violante?" cried Bruno. But the unready tongue was slow in finding a possible answer to this impossible question. "Where is she? Get out of yourself now, if you never did before! Come; speak, speak!"

No answer being forthcoming, Bruno, releasing the painter's throat, bounded forward and threw his hungry fingers toward the poet's. But the hands that had held back one desperate soul were fully equal to holding down another. They took a firm and instant grasp upon Bruno's slender, sinewy wrists, and a pair of grave and comprehending eyes looked out from a grotesque concatena-

tion of features with a calm gaze of commiseration and pardon.

"Forgive me!" cried Bruno, with tears in his eyes. "Forgive me!" he repeated, turning toward the other, who was trying to settle his deranged collar and to compose his outraged dignity. The young fellow made a rapid and eloquent recital of his experiences and his hopes, and the full sympathy of the two artists quickly cancelled all sense of amaze and indignation.

"She is with her friends," said the painter, giving one more gulp. "We freed her knees from the clasp of her duenna's arms and led her away across the garden. She dropped her head upon my shoulder and let me guide her steps. Her hand, her exquisite hand, white, slender, supple, rested in mine. She shook and sobbed and shivered. 'Oh, Bernard, Bernard!'—those were the only words she said. Or was it 'Bertram'? Or possibly 'Basil'?"—

"Nonsense!" cried the Freiherr; "what she said was: 'Oh, Bruno, Bruno!'"

"Yes, yes," acquiesced the painter, after a second's thought. "What she said was 'Bruno,'—to be sure."

"*Are* you sure?" demanded Bruno, hotly.

"*I* am sure," said the poet. "She mentioned the name of Bruno and none other."

"We found a carriage waiting," proceeded the painter. "The footman opened the door and stood ready to help her in. 'I will never go back to

them,' she murmured over and over again. But the footman and the duenna assisted her to enter, and"—

"Where did they drive her?" demanded Bruno, with the savage glitter returning to his eye.

"How can we know?"

"*I* shall know before to-morrow!" the youth declared.

The painter gave his cravat a final adjustment. "We are nearing the South, indeed," he muttered.

## VII

Theodor von Kaltenau was strolling alone along the Strada Nuova of Posilipo. Naples lay below in the distance, and the familiar features of the Bay, at once scaled down and drawn into a concordant entity by the loftiness of his point of view, assumed a sympathetic aspect that qualified their grandiose theatricality and made the absence of the interpretive Bruno less hard to bear.

Bruno was still below in the labyrinthine city, on the third day of his absorbing quest. The Freiherr, who had accompanied him through the first two, had now withdrawn, considering the dues of friendship fairly paid. Together they had roamed the town: they had called upon all the bankers; they had visited all the hotels; they had made their requisition upon the Questura, where the officials, whatever they may have known, gave out no definite information.

The Freiherr loitered along the winding highway. On one hand, the divine hill of Posilipo rose to still greater heights; on the other, the grilled gates of villa after villa opened to him glimpses of rocky, shrub-draped gardens rushing precipitously to the sea.

He felt Bruno's absence. Naples lay idealized, indeed, by virtue of mere distance, but some hearty young organism was still necessary for him if he were to digest the many odious peculiarities of the local life and the many shameful manifestations of the local character: some young soul so firmly grounded upon idealism as to regard things ugly, coarse, and vicious not as the rule but as the exception — and exceptional still, however multitudinous.

He recalled their parting a few hours before. He felt that Bruno, by reason of a certain toss of the head and a certain trick in the slight corrugation of the eyebrows, had shown a little too plainly the arrogance and the querulousness of the wilful and ungracious boy. "But the pace he has chosen will soon enough make him older," thought the Freiherr, indulgently. For the rest, the boy's deportment had been perfect. Never once had he treated the Freiherr with too little respect — or with too much. "He has never made me feel the gravity of the middle years; nor, on the other hand, has he facetiously treated me as an 'old boy.' And never once has he called me by my Christian name. He is not fulfilling the function

I designed him to fulfil; but his wanderings from the course I had chosen are no wider than his years and his temperament can justify."

Absorbed in his own reflections, the Freiherr moved along, half conscious, or less, of his surroundings. The sea shimmered, but not for him, and the embowered entrances to successive gardens shifted by unnoticed. At one stage he saw, without seeing, a young face that looked out upon him, over the tops of a laurel thicket, from a high balcony festooned with full-flowered passion vines. There was a plaintive sorrow on the lips and a look of half recognition in the wide eyes; and a hand was impulsively thrust forth upon the balcony rail, as if a voice might instantly follow. But the Freiherr saw all this vaguely, as in a waking dream, and the girlish face disappeared and the odorous silence remained unbroken.

## VIII

At eleven o'clock that same evening, Bruno burst into von Kaltenau's apartment.

"I have found her!" he cried; "I have seen her; I have spoken with her!"

"Found her? Where?"

"In the Galleria Umberto. I had been on my feet all day. I dropped into a chair before one of the cafés from mere exhaustion. As I lifted my vermouth I saw her — at a table not three yards away. And they were with her — yes, they were

with her; I saw their backs — enough. They are always with her; she is watched, shut in, never allowed to take a step alone" —

"Shut in? The gallery is reasonably public."

"At the villa, I mean. Yes, I looked over the top of my glass — and our eyes met. She started; she trembled; she turned as white as a sheet. They stared at her and looked round to learn the cause; I turned away before they could see my face. She recovered herself, but she seemed so wretched, so pitiable! Yet there was something in her face that told me they were not to conquer her.

"I followed them out. I had a word with her unnoticed. I told her that I — knew. She trembled again and blushed divinely. I told her that I myself had a will — the equal of any other two — and that it was to prevail. I shall see her again at the villa, to-morrow."

"Once more the villa. What villa?"

"The Villa Speranza — name of good omen! — on Posilipo."

"On Posilipo," repeated the Freiherr, thoughtfully. "The Villa Speranza, on Posilipo. Do you know how to find it?"

"I shall find it — be sure of that."

"Let me tell you how you will know it."

"What!" cried Bruno, sharply.

"There are two stone pines on either side of the gateway; there is a laurel-thicket just within; there is a balcony hung with passion-flowers" —

"How do you know all this?" demanded Bruno.

"I passed the villa this afternoon. On the balcony was Donna Violante herself, and" —

"And this is friendship!" cried Bruno, springing to his feet and quivering with indignation. "You knew just where she" —

"Yes; and tell you at the first opportunity."

"Oh, this is shameful, this is outrageous!" declared Bruno in sharp and vibrant tone. "I am being made ridiculous. Always forestalled! Always anticipated! The lagging lover, always so many hours or so many minutes behind! One man saves her life, another discovers her retreat; while I — I who should rightfully" —

"My boy, my boy!" groaned the Freiherr; "this was to have been a voyage of pleasure!" Truly, truly the operetta at Rome had been all too slight a test!

## IX

"Come," said the Freiherr, as the bells of the town jangled an obstreperous midnight; "go to your room and get to bed."

"Do you think I can sleep?" asked Bruno, disdainfully.

"*I* could," ventured von Kaltenau, by way of experiment. "What reply shall I get to that?" was his thought. "Will he reproach me with my cooling blood, with my accumulating years? Will he be inconsiderate, impertinent, scornful, cruel?"

But Bruno contented himself with a look of uncomprehending wonder, that was worse than all the rest combined, and took himself away.

Yet not to sleep — as well he had foreseen. Scarcely had he closed his eyes before Donna Violante appeared. She wore her peplum and her coronet, and her sandalled feet passed in a slow and stately fashion up the great staircase of the Palazzo Astrofiammante — just as when he saw her for the first time. Her hair rippled over her forehead, as at the ball; or, as on the Pincian, it rolled up voluminously, like that of some emperor's daughter at the Capitol; and her well-cut nose might have been attributed, save for a modern tampering of classical severity, to the same lofty source. She repeated her progress several times, in varying manner: sometimes in the serene unconsciousness of ever-triumphant divinity; sometimes in studious, condescending search of a mere mortal, humble but deserving, who waited behind the coupled columns of breccia at the top. Sometimes her head was turned this way, sometimes that; if the latest of her modes seemed successful it was repeated. She slid her exquisite hand over the lustrous surface of the balustrade; the marble, of delicate, blue-veined cipollino, turned dingy upon the moment. The arm, stealing forth from her peplum's hem, showed a dimple in the elbow whose luminous shadow at once lightened and darkened everything in sight. . . . The stairway altered; it became higher, broader,

more magnificent — it was the stairway that filled the heart of some vast and distant palace of romance. Donna Violante climbed on, stepping, stepping, yet never reaching the top, and one was with her who walked by her side and made her mistress of all the splendors round them and of all the servants who lined the ascent on either side. The servants were many, too many, — they were in the way. They vanished at a masterful wave of the hand and left their betters with full freedom to express their joy in each other and their pleasure in such spacious solitude *à deux*.

Half past twelve sounded. Bruno shifted his head to the other pillow.

The stairway seemed willing to persist; but Bruno imperiously imposed another alteration, and it suddenly resolved itself into a series of rampes, terraces, niches, and the two were climbing the face of the Pincian. A glorified vegetation, like the accentuated efflorescences of some wondrous botanical garden, clothed the front of the hill; and after they had reached the top what lay before them was not Rome, but the whole world, rather, with all its powers and principalities, all its promises and potentialities — the world glorified, transfigured, reborn. Donna Violante placed her hand — that same exquisite hand; it never changed — upon the balustrade; but it was too much like a light that, held close before the eyes, hinders rather than helps one's piercing of the darkness. To provide the proper screen for

his dazzled sight he laid his own brown hand upon it.

He held it there while he told her what he had come to tell and she had come to hear. He said it in all possible fashions. He said it simply; he said it elaborately. He said it in this key and that; he said it in the high light of downright bold passion, and he said it in the lower tones of tender, half-veiled insinuation; he modelled his words into slight and sportive figurines, and he heaped his verbal clay up into the towering forms of the heroic, the colossal. She listened flushed, panting, smiling, tearful, proud, disdainful, yielding. . . . Then he lifted his hand from hers and disclosed it covered with rings — rings sparkling with rubies and sapphires and amethysts. "Why are *you* here?" he protested. He snatched them off and flung them over the edge of the hill, and put a ring of his own in their place. Then the plantations behind them suddenly became alive with the friends of both, who trooped forth from under every shrub and tree; and others dashed up in carriages and sprang out to offer their felicitations. Even the bride's parents showed their hateful parchment faces in the background, but did not venture near enough to beg forgiveness. . . .

One o'clock — one — one — one. "If they would but ring all together and have done with it!" Bruno exclaimed.

Yes, Donna Violante was well wedded, but if she

had looked to married life to bring her freedom she was doomed to disappointment. For she was now back on her stairway again. She began in her peplum, but soon discarded it for the half-barbaric costume of the amazonian ancestresses of her husband. Her black and scarlet petticoat swished against the Astrofiammante marbles, and her dark hair, streaming down her back, was bound by the jingling gold head-dress of the Servian highlands. And on she walked for as long as her liege lord willed — and longer.

There was the cracking of a whip in a street near by, and the loud, indignant bray of some belated beast. Bruno sprang up with an angry start. "How shameful!" he cried. "But I shall soon take her away from this odious place."

He shook up his pillow and sank back upon it.

Donna Violante was still upon her stairway — she might as well have been upon a treadmill. She stepped on and on, and suddenly she slipped and fell — fell into the sea. He sprang after her and saved her, he alone; let no uncouth Northman dare to press her head upon his shoulder or feel the touch of that fair hand against his own! He saved her, and saved her again — over and over; and now dripping, now dry, he breathed his devotion and she her gratitude until the bells jangled out once more. Three? Four? No; only two.

Bruno clamped his hands upon his forehead; he felt his brain beating in strong pulsations through

his temples. He sprang up and looked out of the window. The moonlight flooded the silent street; the moon itself shone full and seemed set in its place as if nailed there. "Move on whenever you like — if you can," said Bruno, and returned to bed.

He now found himself before the entrance to a villa. Two tall pines shaded it, and he adjusted them and readjusted them to a laurel-thicket, and a sudden rocky fall of luxuriant garden-growth to the sea, and a high-set balcony blossoming with the flowers of passion. The balcony appeared now here, now there, under one aspect or another; and always from the window shone the same fair beckoning hand — not wearing a ring, but only awaiting one. He climbed the balcony in some fashion all indeterminate; pointed again and again to the sea, now shimmering in the sunshine, now rippling in the moonlight; told of the boat awaiting them by the lowest of the garden's rocky terraces. . . .

Three o'clock. Half past three. Four. Donna Violante, clad in her peplum and crowned with stars, was back again upon her stairway. Unceasingly, indefatigably, at the behest of her impassioned and self-absorbed lover, did she walk all night the great scalone of Palazzo Astrofiammante, and only ceased when he, tired out from very sympathy, fell asleep just as daylight dawned and gave her respite.

## X

"I have seen her again!" cried Bruno, bounding in upon the Freiherr, at twilight the next afternoon.

"And all is well?"

"All — except her parents. She loves me utterly," he added, with great simplicity.

He had found the villa readily enough, and had put the trees, the shrubs, and the balcony into definite relations; and Violante herself had slipped down to admit him and had led him to a shady nook on one of the rocky ledges, where bay and wistaria combined to exclude the suspicious eyes of the house and the teasing twinkle from the rippling face of the sea.

"And to think that that glorious creature is the daughter of such — such — I refuse to believe it!" the young man cried. "She is a niece, a ward, a changeling; she was adopted; or some good fairy at her birth must have put forth all her powers to cancel the curse of heredity! I asked her why her parents hated me, what they had to bring against me . . ."

"What, indeed?" said the Freiherr. "I myself can think of nothing."

"'They don't know me,' I said; 'they have barely seen me — am I a monster? Why won't they give me a chance to speak and tell them what I am and what I have in miud?'

"'They have no more against you,' she said, 'than against another — against every other, save one.'

"'Save one? What one?'

"'One whom they mean me for.'

"'Tell me his name.'

"'He is Prince Malevento, of this city.'

"'You care for him?'

"'I?' You should have seen her eyes!

"'He cares for you?'

"'Hardly more than I for him.'

"'What is your father's motive?'

"'The Prince is a grand seigneur, and a man of wealth. His estates lie scattered from here half way to Rome: past Aversa, Teano, — as far as Borgo San Cipriano.'"

"San Cipriano!" exclaimed the Freiherr.

"You may well cry, 'San Cipriano!'" returned Bruno. "Listen. 'Is he in Naples now?' I asked.

"'I do not know. He was when they brought me here.' She felt — who would not? — the mortification, the disgrace.

"'And did he see you in Rome?'

"'No. He could make the first half of the journey from Naples, but not the last half; he could not get beyond his estate at Borgo San Cipriano. But I could be brought here.'"

"San Cipriano!" exclaimed the Freiherr again.

"Listen. 'Describe him to me,' I said. 'Is he tall or short?'

"'He is none too tall. He has square shoulders.'

"'And is he dark?'

"'Dark, with a dark moustache, and a tuft beneath his lower lip.' I see you understand. Yes, she described him perfectly — that insolent fellow in the front row at the opera. I disliked him the moment I saw him — I see plainly enough why, now. He is a grand seigneur, is he, with great estates? But let us see if his estates are greater than mine, or will serve him better in the end!"

Bruno inflated a determined chest with the vague hopes and expectations that were leading him southward. Von Kaltenau smiled; a man who seemed to care so little could make but small headway against one who cared so much.

## XI

Bruno had slipped out through the gate of the Villa Speranza as dexterously as he had slipped in, but the eyes that could not detect him in the wistaria bower caught him between the pines. All ignorant of this, he returned to the city, and the next day he proposed to the Freiherr, out of his abounding happiness and out of a consciousness, perhaps, that his friend had enjoyed of late but little of his company, an excursion across the Bay. They returned from Sorrento at sunset. As their little vaporetto was approaching the port, a larger steamer, pointed straight for the open sea, passed

within less than a hundred yards. Bruno, idly scanning the passengers that leaned over the rail and looked down upon his own craft, suddenly saw one face he knew. It was that of Donna Violante, fixed firmly and sadly on the receding city.

Bruno caught at a passing deck-hand. "What steamer is that?"

"The steamer for Messina, signore."

Bruno faced about and threw upon the Freiherr a look of anger, exasperation, and rage. "We follow to-morrow!" he said.

The Freiherr sighed. He was becoming a mere subordinate; his plans were as plans that had never been. He bowed in silence.

## PART III. — STILL SOUTHWARD

### I

Bruno left Naples next day for Messina, in accordance with his declared intention. Violante had looked back yesterday over the stern of the steamer; Bruno looked ahead to-day over the bow. The Freiherr, standing at the end of the Immacolatella, strained his eyes in vain for a farewell glimpse of him.

Von Kaltenau had declined to keep up any longer the pace set by the rushing eagerness of Bruno. His own objects were still before him in the fullest definiteness; but Donna Violante, with whom he had never spoken, and whom he had barely seen, did not yet possess a completely established identity in his mind. This was to come later.

"Go with me by land, and give me a few days in Apulia, on the way," the Freiherr had said.

"What do you think I am made of?" demanded Bruno, and steamed away forthwith, alone. They agreed to meet again at Messina.

Von Kaltenau, having lost the Cyclopean antiquities between Rome and Naples, was doubly determined not to lose the Romanesque cathedrals

lately resurrected in the far southeastern provinces. It was in this forbidding district, truth to tell, that he had designed putting Bruno to the final test before they should leave the mainland and take ship together for their ultimate goal. "I should have tested his digestion at those wretched inns," said the Freiherr, "and his stamina in the chars-à-bancs that jolt over those fearful roads, and his patience with the swarming beggars that everywhere abound, and his appreciation of architecture, as well as his ability to rouse my own, before the churches of Trani and Troja and Bitonto and Altamura. But now I must undergo the experience alone and trust to my own unilluminative eye."

But before he ventured upon this exacting expedition he paused to perform one very significant office for his absent young friend. Though Bruno's specific function was now in suspension, the Freiherr was determined that it should be resumed, a little later on, with more effect than ever. "What I see and feel will depend upon what he sees and feels. If I look for warmth I must feed the furnace. The warmth I look for will surely not come from a balked love, nor from a mind inflamed by disappointment. If he is disappointed in one direction he must be satisfied in another. If love fails to quicken his nature so as to meet my requirements, then something else shall: earthly grandeurs, material splendors — the pride of life, in short. That dukedom, whether it exists or not, shall *be*."

Before leaving Naples he bethought himself of a Sicilian friend, to whom he wrote explaining the situation and its needs. The Marchese Capoameno was a man whom he had met during his first Roman sojourn, and who, gallantly braving the terrors of the Alpine passes some years later, had spent a tonic August at Kaltenau. An irregular correspondence — one of many lapses and resumptions — had been carried on through the succeeding years, and now the Freiherr took it up once more. "Filippo," he said, "will serve my turn perfectly. Not only is he a man of wit, but — what is remarkable in the Latin — a man of humor, too. I shall put it all into his hands."

The Freiherr wrote a full statement of the situation, nor did he spare emphasis on his own peculiar plight. "We expect," he wrote, "a dukedom — one of some magnitude, and with estates wide enough to maintain the proper degree of pomp. Palaces, villas, pleasances, spectacles, fêtes, troops of servitors — nothing of that kind can come amiss. Our own dukedom may be found to exist, or not to exist; it may meet our ideals, or it may not — a few weeks will perhaps tell us. But in the provisional dukedom I require for filling up the interval, there must be no flaw, no shortcoming. I know your resources; employ them."

## II

The Freiherr now disappeared from human cognizance — he buried himself among his Apulian cathedrals. Rose-windows occupied him, and lion portals, and tombs, and ambones, and candelabra, — but roused him to no great enthusiasm. He found that, shifting for himself, he fared but indifferently: he might as well have repeated the conventional northern tour — Parma, Reggio, Modena, and the rest — and have stopped at that. Even the façade of Altamura — a physiognomy almost human in its sympathetic sweetness and its irregular play of expression — left him unwarmed, while Bitonto — no, nothing occurred at Bitonto to raise his spirits.

Bitonto's church, like the others, has its rose-window, and its ancient bronze doors flanked by column-bearing lions; and it has, moreover, its own little flagged foreyard set off from the larger piazza by a tiny balustrade, quaint, massy, and altogether unexpected. The larger space flanking the church has a towering column reared in honor of the Madonna, and a range of marble seats after the chaste and severe model of the best Greek days. The Freiherr lounged upon one of these seats, while the sacristan climbed a long ladder to scour the Madonna and her attendant cherubs; and a bustling traffic in pottery — jars and vases whose forms showed the perdurable traditions of Magna Græcia — went on about him.

While the Freiherr was seated thus upon his white slab, a figure dressed in black issued from the cathedral, crossed the inclosure before it, and came picking a careful way through the litter of earthenware that incumbered the paving-stones of the square. The figure was that of a woman, and she carried herself, despite the obstacles in her way, with a certain accentuated distinction that suggested the tragedy queen of other days. She was unmistakably a stranger to the place — the only person of consideration that the Freiherr had yet encountered there; her aspect and carriage alike indicated her intimate alliance with a larger and wider world, a world all alien to the remote provincial preoccupations of Apulia.

"I will accost her," the Freiherr decided; he was growing perceptibly human. "She has a speaking eye, and she may possess a speaking tongue as well."

The woman advanced. Her age seemed to be about his, and her expression was that of one long accustomed to stand by her own strength, and to meet the world on its own hard terms. Her black hair threw a sombre shadow upon her temples, and the look of grave intentness she cast upon the only signorial person within her range of vision but strengthened his determination to speak.

"Madam," said the Freiherr, rising, "I am a stranger here; and you, I judge, are another. We two, I venture to say, are the only strangers in the entire district. That fact should suffice to place us upon common ground."

The lady showed no reluctance to reply. "You are right," she said, in a voice like the tolling of a deep-toned bell; "I am a stranger here. More, I am a stranger everywhere."

"Ha!" cried the Freiherr within himself; "she is willing to speak. And she has something to tell." Already a feeling had come over him such as follows when the footlights sink to the merest glimmer and a great tragedienne takes the centre of the stage to deliver her *tirade.*

"Not to be at home here," replied the Freiherr, "is no great deprivation; and I hope there is no third stranger whose fondness for mediæval monuments has plunged him into the discomforts that Apulia requires us to endure. But to be a stranger everywhere" — He paused interrogatively.

"I cannot claim to share your interest in mediæval monuments," the lady replied. "The interest that has brought me here is of a very different nature."

"Ha!" cried the Freiherr to himself once more; "she *must* speak; she cannot but speak. Presently she will tell me everything."

The sacristan went on rubbing his cherubs. The pottery market continued its course about them, with the shuffling of many feet, the babble of many tongues, the jostling and crushing of the rude wares upon the blue slabs of the pavement.

"May I venture to offer you the half of my bench?" asked the Freiherr. "This piazza is a salon, if we can but bring ourselves to view it so — and the only one available."

"I thank you for your courtesy," replied the lady, with a carefully modulated inflection and a sweeping gesture of an approved and familiar type. She seated herself as does one who feels conscious of the united gaze of many eyes. "A courtesy as grateful as unexpected. Even civility, I find, is no longer to be counted upon of a surety. And yet there were times when I had more, much more, as a mere matter of course."

"It pains me," said the Freiherr, "that civility should come to any woman as a surprise."

"I fear you know the world less well than I. For I have lived — lived." She bent her beetling brows upon the pavement, and clasped tensely the hands lying in her lap.

The Freiherr passed over this belittling assumption. "You have lived, you say. Do you wish to tell me the story of your life?" he inquired gravely, and sat all eyes and ears. He could not hush the house, — a crash and a scream of expostulation came from the other end of the market-place, — but he could give his own best attention; the life experiences of others seemed to be almost becoming his daily food.

"The story of my life? You know it already. Everybody knows it — save the end."

"The end?" repeated the Freiherr. "But that has not been reached."

"Reached and overpassed. I have survived myself."

"When did that happen?"

"Six months ago. I made a grave mistake, and ended my life then and there."

"The story of your life!" cried the Freiherr. "I beg! I insist!"

"You know it already, I tell you." She paused impressively, then gave the yet regal look of an abdicated queen. "I am Monna Clotilde," she said.

But this illuminating declaration left the Freiherr totally in the dark. His mental state was too plain for disguise, and the lady stared at him with a surprise at once mournful and indignant.

"And you do not remember me?" she cried in reproach. "Ah! what, then, is fame? I have survived, it seems, not only myself but even my memory!"

"Madam," said the Freiherr, regretfully, "do not gauge worldly fame by such a poor measure as you find in me. But do not believe that, having once seen you, I could forget."

"What am I to understand?" she asked. "That you have never heard of me at all? Why, under the name of Monna Clotilde I became famous to the whole world!"

"Ah," said the Freiherr, "I am one, I fear, who has been in the world but little. I have my snowy pastures, my châlets, my pine-trees; and among them I have spent too much time, perhaps, heedless of greater concerns."

Monna Clotilde, as she called herself, became somewhat appeased and looked him over with a

slow and critical eye. "You are, indeed, sadly uninformed," she at last said; "but I do not believe you to be lacking in real discrimination. I think I might perhaps trust you with my story."

The Freiherr, who was too fond, possibly, of assuming a world-weary attitude, was rather piqued that this woman, coolly and masterfully taking the upper hand, should set him so quickly and so decidedly in the ranks of the inexperienced; but he hid his umbrage and replied: —

"Give it to me, by all means. You are far from the first to do so. I promise you my best attention."

## III

Monna Clotilde half rose from her bench and then sank back again in a slightly different pose — a manœuvre that seemed necessary to mark the formal entry into a new stage of her performance. And in the first brief silence that overtook the busy mart all round them, she entered with her bell-like voice upon her recital.

"As I have already acknowledged," she began, "I committed a grave error and I have paid for it. The error I made was to take a revenge. But not immediately upon the offense, nor, indeed, till many years after. For opportunity failed during more than one of my most vindictive moods; pity sometimes exercised its sway; and now and then there would return the hope that everything might yet come to be as it had been before. But through

these many years I could still say to myself, 'My day will come; meanwhile, there is always something ahead — something to look forward to; interest in life will never fail so long as he lives and so long as I may strike whenever it shall please me.' This thought, this purpose, became, however little I realized it, the very axis of my existence; it was this — though I discovered it too late — that gave my life unity, object, direction. It drew together the wretched remnants of my days, just as the magnet lays loose bits of iron in order along some central line."

"I can well understand your position," said the Freiherr.

"At last, in a moment of wounded and infuriate pride, I did what could be done but once: I let him die — I made him die — I killed him, if you like. No one knows that I did it; no one knows how I did it. For none could have guessed, and none has ever been told."

"How *did* you do it?" asked the Freiherr, boldly. He saw the opportunity to gain the upper hand in turn — he knew the woman spoke because she must.

"I did it by a means he taught me, a means that was suggested to me by one of his own dramas — my sole indebtedness to him. As for the rest, he owed all to me — a thousand times more than I to him. I took his plays and gave them body and substance; yes, he was a dramatist, though a man of great family and immense fortune. His talent

was wayward and fugitive, but I steadied it, I expanded it, I administered both it and him. I taught him stage-craft and strengthened his art. I carried his plays abroad and made him triumph in the great capitals of the world. As a boy he was a prodigy of precocity, of innate pagan viciousness, — and he always remained a soul naked yet unashamed — more, incapable of shame. I was cautioned; I was warned. But I was no more able to withstand his fascinations than others have been able to since. He accompanied me everywhere; he was as much in public view as I myself; we triumphed together. I made his Monna Clotilde a familiar name far and wide; and yet — and yet — The day came when he spoke the word of parting; it was sudden, it was brutal. He stood in the public street and threw his old gloves away and drew on a new pair. That was the end of my career; nothing reconciled me to the idea of living longer but the thought of my revenge" —

"How did you take it?" asked von Kaltenau, again.

"By a means he taught me," she repeated. "One of his dramas showed a child whose life was an embarrassment and a reproach. It stood between a man and a woman, and gave no happiness to either. The child must die. The measures taken were passive, not active; for there are sins of omission as well as of commission. There are times when one may work one's will by simply staying one's hand, and yet deny all guilt. The

child was ill. It lay near an open window. The weather changed with the changing hours. Close the window, and the child lives; leave it alone, and the child dies."

"And you?" asked the Freiherr, with the persistence of a confirmed reader.

"I shall not tell you what I did, or what I left undone. Imagine me, if you like, as a feigned nurse who withheld the draught. See him, if you will, as a drowning man, struggling for the life that I, with a cry, with a step, might have preserved. Fancy him caught, if you choose, by the accidental closing of some great barred door and starving there because the only one who knew his plight let well enough alone. Believe what you please; I shall not tell you more."

"I am glad to have heard as much. To lighten, thus, by speech, the load of your remorse" —

"Remorse?" she cried, lifting her tragic stare from the paving-stones. "Regret, endless regret, if you like, for my own precipitate folly; but remorse — never! Regret for the feeble means that I employed, when others — who should know them all, if not I? — were at my hand: poison, the dagger" —

"What was his name?" demanded the Freiherr.

Monna Clotilde looked at him long. The longer she looked the further removed did he seem, to both of them, from her world and her tragedy. "I think I may tell you," she said at last. "He was the Prince of Malevento."

## IV

"What!" cried the Freiherr. "The Prince of Malevento!"

"You know the name?" cried Monna Clotilde in turn. "You know the new Prince, his brother?"

"I have seen him — once. The world is small, and I am nearer to it, after all, than either of us fancied. Why are you here?" he asked swiftly.

"Do not ask why. There is no longer any 'why' in such an objectless existence as mine. We are but ten miles from Bari, their family seat," she added.

"What are you going to do here? Take a further vengeance?"

"Willingly, if I might. But most of all I have wandered south to find, if possible, a new object in life, a new interest — an interest that will help me unify my remaining days."

"In other words," commented the Freiherr, with a touch of gothic quaintness, "you are searching for a new backbone."

"Express it in those terms, if you like. My hope," she went on, "is this: To find some tender young soul that I may guide through the thorny paths of this world; to open a pair of innocent eyes upon the manifold iniquities of human life; to show some confiding heart the infidelity, even the treachery of the beloved and trusted object; to see a beautiful nature disintegrate and degener-

ate, not indeed through any fault of mine, but from a perception of the inherent viciousness and hatefulness of the world itself. On such lines as these, my ruined life, I feel sure, would unify itself once more."

"Woman, woman," cried the Freiherr, "you do not mean what you say!"

"With this object in view," went on Monna Clotilde, relentlessly, "I have come southward, where hearts are warmest, where hopes are highest, where the blood courses most freely, where the deed follows most quicky upon the thought. I search day after day for some sweet young girl, — as I loiter on the promenade or linger within the church-door; and in such a nature, once found, I find my own Last Refuge."

"Woman, woman," cried the Freiherr again, "you cannot realize what words you utter!"

"And if by chance," pursued Monna Clotilde, inexorably, "the girl should be an affianced bride, — if fate should favor me so far as to grant me that she be the promised wife of young Malevento" —

"Hush! hush!"

— "who alone has profited by my rash deed, and who may therefore justly stand the punishment I plan" —

"Stop, stop!"

— "then I shall be well content!" Monna Clotilde, with an air of tragic bravado, rose, drew her black mantle about her, and strode away.

"Ah, well," thought the Freiherr, as he sat there and reconsidered this scene and its presentation; "her efforts may be checked — or they may be guided; let it be as the unfolding of events shall require."

## V

Meanwhile no news of Bruno reached von Kaltenau; nor, considering the nature of the circumstances, could anything of the kind be looked for. The Freiherr must content himself with the final picture of Bruno putting off from the Immacolatella and with the hurried words of uncertainty and apprehension that accompanied his departure.

"How am I to know who went with her? Who is to assure me that Malevento did not cross on the same ship? What is there to show that Messina is their real destination? And then the sea, the sea itself! — if it can call to her from the shore, may it not call to her still more loudly from the steamer's deck?"

"Never mind the sea. You have only the word of those two men — complete strangers."

Bruno's look of protest quite abashed the Freiherr; he was made to feel that he had called into question the true-heartedness of the beloved object, and her boundless capacity for rapturous self-immolation.

"You can hardly be sure, of course, that any such action as they described ever took place," he insisted, on the defensive. He made it plain that

a delicate-minded lover would still leave some margin of reserve.

Bruno flushed. "I — I" — he began. But the last moment of possible delay was over, and he pressed ahead with his fellow-voyagers; and the Freiherr, left behind with his own thoughts, could only surmise that the exchange of confidences within the wistaria bower had been without any reserves whatever.

Not that he was able — or disposed — to conjure up a vivid picture of the brief stolen meeting in the villa grounds, with all its ingenuous ardor, its unrestrained interchange of sentiments and confessions. For Bruno's desultory courtship had not even yet assumed in his mind the shape and substance of a solid fact; while Donna Violante, the creature of two or three brief and hurried half-glances and of a few bits of report and hearsay, had hardly conquered for herself the distinct identity of an actual personality. This was to come later.

Donna Violante, in fact, had done more for him than he for her. She had observed him on the Pincian, — however little she may have seemed to see, — and she had recognized him on Posilipo, and had become enough interested to ask some questions about him.

"He is a splendid man," said Bruno, in response. "Rather quiet and earnest and sedate, perhaps, but still a" —

"I like men of that type," she declared. "A

strong, steady man, who makes little stir and yet gives you the feeling that he may be depended upon, must be a great comfort."

"You do not like me, then?" asked Bruno, quickly piqued. "You would have me quiet and sedate. You would have me moon and mope. Very well, then; give me twenty years."

"Forty would not be enough," replied Violante, smiling. "Meanwhile, I ask for no change."

"And as far as being depended upon is concerned," Bruno rushed along, "let me tell you that he has to depend as well as another, and that his dependence is wholly on me!"

"On you? That seems improbable. Mine may be on you, perhaps, but not his."

"You disparage me! You ridicule me! Yet I have shown him a new world, all the same. But if I could only reveal to him such a world as you have revealed to me!" he cried.

"*I* might do it."

"No," he cried again, catching her by her wrists. "No, you shall not say that! You shall not think of such a thing!"

"Foolish boy!" murmured Violante, giving her lips along with her wrists.

Meanwhile the Freiherr, with his interests and sympathies minimized by distance, solitude, temperament, and the absence of any interpretive aids, went on with his journey, finding little to his taste in things, and little more in persons.

## VI

Bari, even as the ancestral seat — to adopt the expression of the tragic woman at Bitonto — the ancestral seat of the Maleventi, had no interest for the Freiherr; it was only his point of departure for Táranto. On the brief journey between these two towns — a flight from the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian — his sole companion was a young man of expansive nature and voluble speech, who began to talk at the start and talked indefatigably till the finish. He was a writer — this transpired without loss of time — and his principal concern was the portrayal of his contemporaries in works of fiction.

"I have succeeded," he said; "I have established myself, and have position, recognition, a following. But my position is only about so high; my recognition not completely general; my following, to confess the truth, rather limited. I ask myself why. I have almost found the answer. My participation in life has been, after all, but partial. I have always felt a slight reluctance about committing myself — a touch of dread about letting myself go. I have lived, in fact, by the seashore without ever venturing into the water. Others have gone in before my eyes, and I have recorded, to the best of my endeavor, the exhilarations they appeared to feel, the dangers they appeared to brave. But as soon as the waves have

stolen up to my own toes, I have always stepped back upon the dry sands."

"There are other elements besides water," observed the Freiherr. "The sea hath its pearls, true; but no less has the land its diamonds. I myself have not often ventured into the surf, — at least of late years, — but all the same" —

"All the same, you have found your diamond?"

The Freiherr returned no categorical answer. "And there is fire — burn your fingers with that. And there is air. None of the elements can lead one into more promising difficulties and into more profitable dangers than air, as it slips through the vocal chords of the human throat. A little whiff of air, rightly directed, may compass all the weal or woe that our poor flesh is capable of enduring."

"But my fancy," insisted the other, "has always turned to the sea — the sea we have just left at Bari."

"And the sea that we shall presently regain at Táranto."

"I have always wished that it might steal up to me with its myriad fingers and drag me out, despite myself, to an exploration of its depths and dangers. Time and again I have hoped it might rush up the beach in one great wave, overwhelming me, hurrying me out, tossing me, buffeting me, destroying me at need, this wonderful sea of life!"

"I take the ordinary precautions," said the Freiherr, dryly; "the life line, the life preserver."

"And what I long for most of all," went on the other, with increasing volubility, "is free participation (as a subordinate, perhaps) in some heart-drama warm with human passion. To be not a looker-on, but an actual actor. To have my finger on the pulse of intrigue, to feel the heart-beats of hate and hope and despair. Then, I am sure, would my work at last be all it should be, my position the highest, my recognition universal, my following like the sands of — yes, like the sands of the sea!"

"That aim has brought you here?"

"Yes, if I have wandered so far afield it is for this very purpose — to find a group of ardent, passionate souls racked by doubts, disappointments, rivalries, jealousies — to look on, to participate through sympathy, to record with exactness" —

"Are you crossing over to Sicily?" asked the Freiherr. He thought of his young friends who had already hastened thither and of the various minds — observing, inquiring, interpreting — that were moving in the same direction. The possible anguish of the persons principally concerned in these potential complications might be assuaged in part by the general richness of the commentary.

"Yes. And Sicily will put a term to my travels. There, if anywhere, my aspirations must be satisfied. For me it is the *dernier ressort*, the" —

"The Last Refuge," von Kaltenau supplied automatically.

"Yes, the Last Refuge. I hasten to the catastrophe, hoped for but still uncertain, unknown. At all costs I must be in at the death."

"You feel like that?" asked the Freiherr. "*I* should feel like an intruder."

"One *must* intrude. One must gather his data. If I am to divine the inner labyrinth I must at least have the outer indications; if I am to portray the workings of the inmost nature I must not be denied the closest study of unrestricted play of feature. The tribute due from nature and from the modesty of nature must be exacted" —

"I understand. The modesty *of* nature must be ruthlessly overstepped if professional necessities require it. But what I am thinking of is the tribute of modesty due *to* nature, — the universal freemasonry that should coöperate to cloak charitably the nakedness of the poor creature taken unaware. I myself try always to have but a dull eye and a deaf ear for any one caught in the open by a great emotional crisis — such a crisis as sets self-mastery beyond reach and puts concealment quite out of the question. Even at the theatre I often find myself wishing for the revival of the Greek masks" —

"You will never make a novelist in the world!"

"I have always suspected that," observed the Freiherr, dryly.

## VII

Von Kaltenau had been drawn to Táranto by the magic of the name and by the recollection of a silvery steel engraving that had hung for years beneath a pair of chamois horns in the great hall at home. The place justified his expectations; he became almost enthusiastic, even without aid, over the storied old town perched there, between its two harbors and in its later guise of massy castle and towered cathedral, upon the ancient acropolis of Taras. The narrow streets, the white houses with flat roofs, the Greek jargon of the sailors in back lanes — all these were like a foretaste of the East. He looked in at the arsenal, and sailed through the oyster beds of the inner harbor, and visited one or two gardens of an Oriental luxuriance on the mainland.

"I can rise to this," he said, "unaided."

As he strolled along past the balconied palaces of the sea promenade — relics of the Spanish viceroys — and surveyed the capes and islands that shut in the greater harbor from the still greater gulf without, and cast an anticipatory eye over the Calabrian mountains past which to-morrow's journey would lead him, an elderly person of slow walk and lugubrious mien came toward him.

"He intends to accost me," thought the Freiherr. "Let me speak first and know the worst."

He stepped forward quickly. "Sir," he said,

"your mind is troubled. Speak out, and speak freely. Tell me, if you choose, the story of your life."

The other bowed gravely, in recognition of so sympathetic an approach. "What is of concern is not so much the story of my life," he began, thus tracing the first line of another drawing in the Freiherr's collection of Portraits of Travel, "as the condition under which my life has been lived. I am a Just Man, but not a happy one."

"That was my impression," said the Freiherr.

"I have spent the whole of my life actuated by a feeling for exact justice. I have lived all my days in the fullest rectitude. I have never taken an unfair advantage of any one; I have never knowingly done any one an injury. Yet I have never been happy myself, nor have I ever made anybody else happy. No one cares for me; no one really likes me."

"What of it?" inquired the Freiherr. "There is nothing greatly attractive in mere exact justice. I myself have lived a fairly correct life, but I have not always had the fortune to make myself well liked."

"But, on the other hand, I have met so many rogues who could please without an effort, so many fascinating rascals who receive a glad welcome where my own studied conscientiousness has gained no response whatever. What is the reason? I have scoured the world to find it."

"And have got no light?"

"None whatever — as yet."

"That is discouraging, is it not?"

"I am not sure. I have often felt my situation to resemble that of the Indian devotee who sits meditating year after year upon one sole matter. Time passes; the years roll up; the darkness of doubt still encompasses all; and no appreciable advance is to be observed. At last a certain point is reached. Light comes, and it comes all at once — there is a plenary revelation. The darkness flies, and in the flooding brightness the meaning of all things is manifest and the comprehension of all things is complete."

"Do not wait," said von Kaltenau. "I have the light you look for and will share it with you. If it displease you to have your question answered by a man younger than you, then let me say this same answer came to me yesterday from a man still younger than I. The softened impact of two successive stages may serve to" —

"I am listening," said the other, with the docility of complete dejection.

"You are a recluse, I observe," the Freiherr began; "your bent back shows it, and your colorless face. You have never participated; you have never taken a hand. Am I right?"

"Quite so."

"The principal point, I take it, is neither to be just nor the reverse. The principal point is to be a good human being, regardless of mere considerations of justice or even of morality. Let the

human sap flow; let the blood course. Strive for warmth, for unction, and much will be forgiven, — even the errors committed and the discomforts inflicted by a rigid sense of mere justice. I speak as a theorizer, upon hearsay: I am enough like you to understand you."

"I thank you," replied the Just Man. "I shall enter upon my Sicilian journey with a more contented mind."

"You are crossing over to Sicily?" asked the Freiherr, dubiously.

"Yes. And in that new field, with your kind observations held to heart, I shall hope to work the change that may make the world a happier place to me and myself a happier man in it. I must, indeed, or there is no further hope left. For me this is the Last" —

"I know, I know," interrupted the Freiherr, hastily. "But too many are already travelling the road you are about to take. At its end you will find nothing that you cannot find here, or even whence you set out. Turn back; turn back. Learn to smile before you travel — at least before you travel in Sicily."

## VIII

Metapontum survives in a few fragmental temples scattered widely over a half-tilled country-side, in a few farmhouses rudely reared among the saffron-fields out of massive blocks pilfered from the ancient walls, in rows of violated tombs, and in

traces of a harbor long choked with sand. The Freiherr, engaging a peasant and his horse, devoted a lowering afternoon to the all but vanished city of Pythagoras.

Seated amidst the most remote of all the ruins was an old, old man. There was nobility in his long white beard, and in the brooding eyes he lifted from the temple pavement upon the sound of approaching steps.

He rose, as if to welcome another stranger to Metapontum's ruined and deserted fanes; he seemed to feel that some bond of sympathy must exist between two men who could come so far to see so little. "What will be the burden of this new plaint, I wonder?" thought von Kaltenau. "Whatever it is, I can bear it; for the farther I go the older do people seem to become, and I myself the younger and stronger by comparison!"

The old man had come as far as many others, and had seen as much by the way. His journey had wearied him, and he was glad to rest the load of his years and his disappointments upon younger shoulders. The Freiherr felt, with emotions curiously contradictory, that he was looked upon as a mere boy.

In fact, the old man mused aloud before him, almost as if in the presence of some careless and uncomprehending child. "I have seen many men and many cities, but there is one more city that I must see before I die. Genoa I have seen, — Genova la Superba, as they call it. And Rome I

have seen, — Roma la Santa, as all the world names it. And other cities I have seen: la Ricca, la Dotta, l' Industriosa, and many more. But let la Superba pass — I am now too world-worn for pride; and la Santa as well — since, old as I am, I do not yearn for sanctity. Away, too, with la Ricca — riches are nothing to me. And away with la Dotta — learning is but a mockery, a burden. And away with l' Industriosa, for the energies of the workaday world I left behind me years ago. But there is one thing I long for as hungrily as ever." He looked up pathetically at the younger man standing before him. "Let them all pass — la Ricca, la Dotta, la Santa, la Superba; but vouchsafe me at least a glimpse of la Felice, the City of Happiness."

"The Last Refuge," said the Freiherr, softly.

"The Last Refuge," softly repeated the other.

## IX

The Freiherr, speeding along the Calabrian coast, on his way toward Reggio and the straits of Messina, devoted the long hours of a threatening day to a consideration of the new cast that the progress of events had put upon his journey. He had begun with an exclusive interest in things; he was likely to end with an exclusive interest in persons. The gospel that had been preached to him by a younger man, the gospel that he himself had preached to an older man, was one that he

was coming to take with more seriousness than he confessed even within himself, and to hug more closely to heart than anybody, but shortly before, could have made seem probable to him. The proper study of mankind was becoming plain; men were fully as interesting as their works; personalities counted for as much as galleries, churches, gardens. The dead temple of Metapontum was of less worth than the living temple within it. He passed in review the other living temples that had come beneath his notice during the past fortnight: the discontented Doctor at Rome, the noxious nobleman at Borgo San Cipriano, the lugubrious recluse at Táranto. "They are all moving my way," he thought; "how many of them shall I meet again?" He recalled the pompous progress of the Lady of Quality and the reckless confidences of the sometime queen of tragedy. Truly the one was of more interest than the towns through which she travelled, and the other of more interest than the cathedral before which she sat. Here was a field in which the aid of young Bruno, however alert he might be, however feeling, could have counted for but little. Donna Violante alone, of all his new types, failed to solidify into a concrete image. She was but a vague and distant mirage, nor did he even remotely approach such questions as these: Will she become more distinct? Who will reveal her to me? And what will result for me and for the performer of that friendly office?

## X

Over the straits the contending powers of light and of shadow were at play; the mountain peaks on both the Calabrian and Sicilian sides were hidden by the gray masses of lowering clouds; slight showers fell now and then, and the narrowing reach of waters was lightened here and there by the long lines of sunbeams that lived a precarious moment by favor of the shifting heavens. From the quay at Reggio the water-front of Messina showed gray or white or golden as one condition or another prevailed above and behind. And to the northward, against the deep blue curtain that rain and distance drew between Scylla and Charybdis, a full-rigged bark shone like a phantom refleshed under a rainbow whose arch spanned the leaden reach of waters from shore to shore.

The Freiherr, about to step aboard the steamer, became conscious of an altercation in progress close by upon the quay. It was a controversy of a type perfectly familiar to every Mediterranean seaport; the disputants were a sturdy facchino, with the fluent command of his native dialect, and a woman, past her first youth, who spoke a theoretical Tuscan with the accent of a German and the stiffness of a beginner. Though the woman was by no means young and by no means beautiful, her detached position (she was apparently quite alone) and her obvious inexperience (she

was plainly abroad for the first time) moved the Freiherr to compassion. He intervened. The facchino tenaciously kept hold on a certain worn and unwieldy portmanteau; the woman tearfully clutched a pathetically thin little purse. "He shall not impose upon her," resolved the Freiherr. "Let me assist you," he said, advancing, in German.

The woman — she was some five years his junior — opened her brown eyes first with surprise and then with a great relief. He turned to the man. "Why do you refuse to let go this portmanteau?"

"The signora refuses to pay me for the trunk."

"I *have* no trunk!" cried the signora, as soon as the meaning of this observation was made plain to her. "The trunk belonged to somebody else. I have only that portmanteau and this handbag."

"Well, then, my man," said the Freiherr, handing him a coin, "take this and stop troubling us." The Freiherr picked up the shabby, ill-packed portmanteau and stepped aboard. The lady humbly followed, in an abject state of gratitude and admiration.

Von Kaltenau led his protégée to a favorable place on deck, sheltered from the weather yet open to the views, and his own facchini followed after. "We shall be nearly an hour in crossing, and you might as well take it comfortably."

He cautiously looked her over. She was a gentlewoman, assuredly, but one of a very unusual type. The pinch of poverty was plain upon her

whole person, but the animating influence of a high and disinterested enthusiasm was equally plain in her face and bearing, as she followed the Freiherr with a sprightly, springy step and threw her head gallantly to right and left over the varied prospect of land and sea. Her dress was travel-worn (there might be another in the bulging portmanteau, or not), while her gloves and even her crackled boots were miracles of painstaking needle-work — stitched, darned, patched, what not. Her brown eyes, though they kept on opening in a button-like surprise at every slight attention from the Freiherr, contrived to have a soft expression of their own, — a limpid, virginal, inexperienced glance, as from the eyes of Innocence herself. She set down her handbag, and teased the forefinger of one of her time-worn gloves, and apologized with a sincere, unaffected humility for the trouble she had given.

"Only a few soldi, I know," she said. "But every soldo counts. It shall. It must."

"You are quite right," said the Freiherr, "not to allow yourself to be imposed upon."

Continuing in the habit he had lately formed, he gave his new charge — she was still such, for he must see her through like troubles at Messina — abundant opportunity to account for herself; he even asked a few questions. But Mam'zelle Hedwig appeared to have no undue consciousness of her own personality, and no particular dissatisfactions to air. Her remarks were of the most

general nature, and the Freiherr was left at liberty to construct her character and her environment for himself.

This, during the passage, he did. He referred Mam'zelle Hedwig back, then, to the remotest and bleakest of the German cantons of Switzerland, where a large family lived under a small roof, — small, but historic and respectable, — and received visits from the pastor and the burgomaster of the town hard by. She was not the only daughter, nor the youngest, and she had lingered long before detaching herself, even temporarily, from the family tree. Thrift was the watchword of the household, and every penny was accounted for. He figured her as skimped and pinched a little, browbeaten a good deal, and subordinated habitually by impatient and tyrannical brothers, — "else why should small services call forth so much surprise and gratitude?" A consuming desire for travel in Italy had come upon her early — this was according to her own account and in correspondence with her every action. She had hoarded her small savings for years, some kind relative had perhaps good-naturedly increased her little store, and here she was. All this the Freiherr surmised, and in the main his surmises were correct.

"Ah, Sicily, Sicily!" Mam'zelle cried time and again during the crossing. "At last I see it! At last! At last!"

She was in a state of exaltation and made no effort to conceal it. The Freiherr wondered whe-

ther even young Bruno de' Brunelli could discharge his enthusiasm with more *élan*.

"It will be the crown of my whole journey," she cried. "It will repay me for everything!"

"For disappointments, for disenchantments?" suggested the Freiherr.

"Disenchantments? I have met none!"

"Hardships, then."

"Hardships? Even the hardships of travel are pleasures!"

"Then Sicily is not your Last Refuge?"

Mam'zelle stared at him in frank wonder. "Refuge? Refuge from what, pray?"

The abashed Freiherr murmured some unintelligible reply.

"Refuge?" repeated Mam'zelle Hedwig. "Refuge from unkindness? But everybody has been most considerate. Refuge from poverty? But I am not poor — I still have eight hundred and seventy-three francs left, and fifteen centimes. Refuge from the years? But I am only thirty-five — and a few weeks, — and do not feel a day older. Refuge from the beauties of this glorious world? Should I turn to Sicily for that? Rejection of the best of all good omens?" she concluded, pointing to the rainbow arched above them. "I'm sure I hardly know what you may mean."

The Freiherr was much impressed and much pleased by these observations. He was much benefited by them too; they had a tonic quality

of which he stood much in need. The woman now gathering up her meagre belongings to land at Messina was vastly different from the woman who had contended with the porter at Reggio; never a metamorphosis more sudden, more complete. Mam'zelle's handbag had lost half its shabbiness; even her boots seemed much less incredible than at first.

Messina drew near. The steamer came to its moorings. Mam'zelle prepared to sink into new abysses of gratitude. But this time she was not to have an undivided attention. On the wharf stood Bruno; and the Freiherr, catching a glimpse of him, failed to read in his face any indication of favorable news.

## XI

Von Kaltenau put Mam'zelle into a cab whose driver could be trusted not to charge for a non-existent trunk and saw her set off for a hotel that was well within her means. Mam'zelle had no false shame and no fastidiousness. She had determined to cut the largest possible coat out of the meagre patch of cloth at her disposal, and had become a past mistress in all that relates to shifts and economies. The Freiherr passed her later in the day. She was roaming rapturously up and down the Marina, assisting in the loading and unloading of brigs and schooners from Syracuse or Zante, ordering the departure of the different ferry-boats, trafficking gingerly with the venders

of anise-water and dried pumpkin seeds, and drawing beads upon the varying vistas that were opened up by the straits and closed by the Calabrian mountains.

Bruno, after a fleeting glance of wonder at the Freiherr's new familiar, reverted to his own preoccupations. He followed von Kaltenau across the wide quay to the hotel and gave him an account of the developments of the past week from a second story balcony that overlooked the busy harbor below.

The inexorable parents of Donna Violante, it transpired, had not been content with any half measures. They had paused at Messina but a day, and then had taken her home — to the capital, where they now were.

"And where they will remain," remarked the Freiherr. "Solid ground for you at last. You will follow immediately, of course."

"Follow immediately? I left there only last evening!"

"Is Malevento with them?"

"Not so far as I can learn."

"You have seen" —

"I have seen her father. I forced my way to him and braved him under his own roof. An infernally cross-grained, sour-tempered, obstinate old villain!"

"You speak freely."

"I spoke freely then, too. I told him what I wanted, who I was, and in more guarded terms

what I hoped to be. He laughed in my face — in just the fashion that a cross-grained, sour-tempered man would. What was there for me to do? Who am I, after all, if one must know with full precision?"

"You have not seen the notaries and all the rest?"

"Yes, yes," returned Bruno, beating the balcony-rail impatiently with his fist; "both here and there. Difficulties, delays, exactions, postponements, documents, depositions. The whole thing is still in the clouds." He sent his exasperated glance ranging up and down the crowded Marina and over the swarming harbor.

"H'm," replied the Freiherr, thoughtfully, as he wondered what the letters awaiting him at his banker's might contain. "But *I* have come, and within three days at the outside we shall have brought the whole thing down to earth."

## PART IV. — THE PALACE OF PLEASURE

### I

BELRIGUARDO lies high above the sea, surrounded by vineyards and by groves of orange-trees and olives and almonds and mulberries. Above it rise heights covered by the ilex and by towering groups of stone pines — heights that lead to the crowning height of all, clothed with forests of beech and of oak. Before it the ground slopes easily, in limestone reaches abloom with the rock-rose and the purple cytisus, down to the brows of cliffs and promontories that make their sudden descent to the scant shingle of the shore. From Belriguardo's vast terrace one sees the goats browsing among the tamarisks and sumachs that fringe the rocky headlands, and the sails of the sardine-fishers moving busily over the wide expanse of blue water; and the long line of coast — bold and broken, yet suave withal — shows here a church, there a Saracen watch-tower, — on one height the ruins of a Norman castle, on another the fragmental tombs and temples of some immemorial city of the Greeks.

Belriguardo itself is a Sicily in miniature. Every period of foreign domination has left its mark

there; no time throughout the long procession of the changing years remains unrepresented in this picturesque conglomerate. The great courtyard, with its coupled columns and its ponderous round arches done in billet and dog-tooth mouldings, is Norman; the well-curb set in the middle of it is Byzantine. The long banquet-hall dates from the days of the Spanish viceroys and is heavy with the stately pomp of Aragon. The great terrace, with its noble rampes and balustrades, marks a happy moment in the period of the high Renaissance, though the fountain-basins and fish-ponds below it are wilfully, perversely baroque. The big tower that dominates all claims a late Roman origin for its foundation stones; and a bit of terra-cotta dug up one day near its base — a bull-headed god with eyes slyly aslant — might easily pass for a relic of Phœnician Carthage. The tiny oratory was once a mosque. Its christianized walls still show here and there the outlines of a Moorish arch, and in more than one dusky corner a shred of honeycomb work survives to give a slight impetus to the circulation of orthodox blood. The pleasance, whose rose-thickets are peopled with the lichened statues of marble divinities, is gayly and irresponsibly rococo, while the long laurel-walks, festooned with jasmin and eglantine, are joyously of to-day. Such is the domain that the Freiherr has bespoken for young Bruno, until something better shall be his, — such the stately and storied pile wherein the new duke of Montegrifone has gallantly resolved to keep open house for the ensuing fortnight.

Bruno, on his first view of Belriguardo, had not been able to suppress a cry of delight. It lay three or four miles away, over rolling uplands sprinkled with holm-oaks and carobs, and was first seen from an ancient Roman bridge whose arch spanned a rugged ravine overgrown with lentisks and arbutus. The tall tower that ruled his new estate rose level with a group of cypresses just behind, and the long front of the terrace, catching the late afternoon sun, drew a broad foundation line of white for the varied façade above.

As they paused on the bridge to view this enchanting spectacle — even more enchanting to the landed proprietor than to the lover of nature — they heard the sound of hoofs and wheels, and presently a train of coaches and lettigas came in sight at a bend in the road, and halted just short of our travelers.

These conveyances had the ornate and stately character of the early years of the century — they were covered with carving and gilding; and the trappings of the mules and horses showed such an utter abandon in the way of bell, braid, and tassel as Sicily, and Sicily alone, is capable of. The numerous persons who dismounted from coach or saddle seemed to date from a period hardly less distant, and to display a taste scarce less ornate. They appeared to compose the household of a great provincial magnate whose estates were too remote to be influenced by mere passing fashions, and whose mode of living was firmly grounded upon

the ceremonial and the traditions of an ancient and well-established procedure. These various persons advanced gravely in a body and performed their deferential salutes before Bruno de' Brunelli, now the Duca di Montegrifone.

The Freiherr, rapidly passing them in review, thought he distinguished a major-domo, a steward, a head gardener, a master of the horse, — the establishment was apparently of a state and magnitude to support such an official, — and numerous valets and grooms. There was also a dignified housekeeper, and close beside her was a sprightly young thing in a red petticoat, who seemed at once very demure and extraordinarily self-possessed. She stole glances at Bruno in a humorous, yet critical way, and when she had looked him over she looked him over again. "A lady's-maid," said the Freiherr to himself. "Has Filippo, with all his other gifts, the gift of clairvoyance?"

Bruno looked in turn at the young thing standing there in her short petticoat and her laced bodice with a surprise that soon passed into admiration. The Freiherr, studying the others meanwhile, noticed that one of them, the major-domo, in knee-breeches, white silk stockings, and a hat and waistcoat *de fantaisie*, was staring at him with a significant fixity, and that the stare was now and then reinforced by a slight lifting of the eyebrows. Von Kaltenau looked at the fellow once again, and was much surprised, and not a little disconcerted, to find in him the Marchese Capoameno himself.

## II

"My dear Filippo," the Freiherr found opportunity to say to the Marchese as the caravan was returning to Belriguardo, "you have quite outdone yourself. I hardly dare ask you who all these other people are."

The Marchese gave a frank laugh — Bruno being out of sight and hearing. "The head postillion is young Count Cervel-Balzano; he has come fifteen miles to share in this, and contributes one of the coaches. The groom riding behind us on the big black mare is the most promising of my nephews."

"And the ladies?" inquired the Freiherr, cautiously. "The — the — housekeeper, perhaps?"

"Housekeeper; quite right. That stately person is my aunt, and she has jumped into the part in a very young and spirited fashion."

"And the — the young lady in bodice and short petticoat?"

"That is my irrepressible sister. She was for coming, at first, as one of the kitchen-boys, in white cap and apron; I believe she even meditated carrying along a spoon. But all that, of course, I could n't quite permit, and to soften her disappointment I allowed her to join us as a lady's-maid. You have seen the result of our compromise; what do you think of it?"

"Most charming, but" —

"But what? Ah, I see: you mean that, there being no ladies in your party" —

"Ha!" said the Freiherr, "if that is a deficiency it is like enough to be made good. My 'but' was a much more comprehensive one than that."

"Explain."

"My dear fellow," returned the Freiherr, earnestly, "you have done altogether too much for me. Your fancy, your invention, your taste for histrionics, your passion for representation — well, I can only hope that they won't involve you in too extreme an embarrassment. This whim, this sudden impulse — I can but trust that we ourselves may not be the means of punishing you for it. For we, such as you see us, are, as I fear, but the advance guard of a vast horde. We have journeyed south with them — some of them. They all seem to be moving toward one common objective point, and you, my poor friend, are exactly in the line of the storm. The hurricane will sweep over you; the swarm of locusts will darken your sun and devour your substance. My dear Filippo, we are now conspicuous; we have become celebrated; we are close to the king's highway, and we are likely to see some strange people."

Capoameno laughed again. "Let them come. When may the first locust be looked for?"

"To-morrow, or the day after. In fact, she is the only one that we have distinctly invited — the rest will find us without an invitation."

"Ah, the first locust is a lady? She is young and charming, I hope."

"You may determine for yourself. As for her age, it is a little less than yours or mine. As for her charm, it lies altogether in a fresh and sensitive mind, in a highly poetical imagination, and in a hardy determination to idealize everything and everybody. I invite her here for her tonic quality; of all my recent acquaintances she is the only one that has done me any good. She will come prepared to throw a roseate glamour over Belriguardo and every one about it."

"Shall I be able to idealize *her?*"

"I should think the better of you for trying."

"A compatriot?"

"Almost."

"A matron?"

"N—no."

"Oh, you of the North! I shall never understand you! But I will exchange roseate glamours with this idealizing maid to the best of my ability. Yet stay; dare I look so high — I, a mere servant?"

The Freiherr laughed, a little constrainedly. "My poor Filippo, you have put yourself in a false position, and you will not be allowed to forget it. Here is one slight check; but there will be a hundred more checks and embarrassments to follow!"

## III

Bruno slipped smoothly into his new life, with all its splendors, its promises of pleasure, and its many manifestations of deference and obsequiousness. He heard himself hailed daily, hourly, as "Eccellenza," and easily came to take this lofty appellation as a matter of course. The duties and obligations of his new station were temporarily set aside — and properly enough, all things considered — for its enjoyments; and the grandson of the mountain chieftain readily assumed the arrogant tone of command, and stretched out an imperious hand to gather the first-fruits of the new dispensation.

Von Kaltenau, considering that at last he had set his Æolian harp to the most advantageous breeze, lent an attentive ear to the forthcoming harmony. The harmony came, indeed, but in a grandiose and complicated mode that intimidated rather than pleased; and a subtle threat of discord was never absent from its tones.

The Marchese, who had rushed into his whimsical masque on the impulse of a moment, had never paused to consider how it would seem to be superseded — even for a week or two — as master in his own house. Bruno had come into an old place with a fresh eye, a youthful love of change for its own sake, and a very definite intention of making his force felt. He was impressed by some of the

traditional observances, but did not hesitate to direct alterations in others, and his orders to the Marchese himself, relative to changes in stable and garden, required much *finesse* and ingenuity to evade.

As for the Marchesina Lucetta, this lively young person soon found herself tiring of the position into which her brother's *esprit* and her own high spirits had led her. The short petticoat and the laced bodice palled by the second day, and by the morning of the third the coquettish little head-dress upon her fluffy locks weighed like a veritable cap of penitence. Bruno looked upon her with as much admiration as her beauty demanded, but treated her with no more consideration than her apparent station in life justified. His compliments had more heartiness than delicacy. Her little dream of a spirited young seigneur who should treat her at once with the delicious ease and freedon that a lady's-maid might call out and the deference proper to gallant converse with a marchioness, slowly dissolved.

The Freiherr soon noticed the growing tension of the situation; clearly, things could not remain as they were. The arrival of Bruno's first guest brought matters to a head. Von Kaltenau was actually in conference with the Marchese and his sister when the earliest requisition upon the hospitality of Belriguardo was seen to impend. This conference took place in one of the obscurer corners of the great terrace — in direct defiance of

the Marchese's own orders forbidding the servants to show themselves in that quarter — behind a friendly camellia standing on the balustrade in its big earthen pot. Suddenly, from the road at the bottom of the hill-slope, came the light patter of hoofs, the jingle of bells, and the whoop of a boyish voice. The Freiherr, looking through an opening among the oleanders, caught sight of a head bobbing on with gay good-will, and a moment later, when the wall along the roadway fell to a lower level, there was revealed the spectacle of Mam'zelle Hedwig, intrepid and unconventional, advancing upon Belriguardo on the back of a small donkey.

"Ah," cried the Freiherr, "it is the admirable Mam'zelle! She said she would come, and here she is!"

"The — the lady you spoke of?" asked Filippo, with a smile; but it was a smile that had some little touch of coldness round the edge. He looked out again at the travel-stained rider, the ragged beast, the dusty child scuffling behind. "Lucetta, go get your whisk-broom."

The Marchesina did not respond to this ironical sally. The Freiherr rushed in to forestall an outbreak of vexation.

"All this can really go no farther," he declared; "you must set yourselves in a different light — one in better accord with your real position. You have degraded yourselves quite enough; let it be mine to help you reconquer your lost gentility."

"But how?" asked the Marchesina, with a rueful pout.

"Like this. Having disguised yourselves once, there is nothing for you to do but to disguise yourselves again. Having begun as gentry playing at being servants, you must now go on as servants playing at being gentry. In other words, the household staff of the Duke of Montegrifone will now appear as his guests. They will be expected to dress and to behave so as to give a reasonably good imitation of ladies and gentlemen — though not too good a one!"

"Ah!" said Capoameno, thoughtfully; "it sounds complicated."

"How else can you eat at your own table?"

"And imitations by imitations," complained Lucetta; "how can they be expected to deceive?"

"In what other way, signorina, can you get back into long skirts and escape the thraldom of the whisk-broom? Really, it is the only way out; indeed, I consider you fortunate to get off so lightly from the consequences of such a grave indiscretion. Come, my dear friend," — to Filippo, — "this will enable you to ride your own horses, though only when the Duke suggests it. And you, signorina, may then dine at the table in the banquet-hall (there will be banquets, I assure you) instead of merely nibbling cold things in the pantry afterwards."

"Ah!" gasped the Marchesina.

"Come," said the Freiherr, "let me ask the Duke to direct you to" —

"Direct!" muttered Filippo, appreciatively.

—"to direct you to impersonate his guests. We need a few — particularly a lady. Will you condemn the perfectly worthy person who is now approaching" — another ringing whoop from the ragged boy in the dust-cloud — "to be the only lady in the house? I trust not. I don't know where her baggage is," he went on, while he looked searchingly across the hundred yards that intervened; "but I assure you that she is a person of the warmest enthusiasms and the most delicate sensibilities; and if her mode of approach seems to savor of an Oriental primitiveness, please bear in mind that it is in accord with the best Saracenic traditions. Hear me; whatever you can offer her of grace, distinction, gayety, and kindliness — even if but travestied — will no more than meet the generous conceptions she has already formed of the Sicilian nobility. My dear Filippo, be a gentleman! My dear signorina Marchesina, let me beg you to be a lady! I am sure the Duke, your master, will interpose no objections. Think of the benefits to yourselves! Think of the advantages to our approaching guests! Think of the magnificent impression upon the Duke himself, when he sees that in Sicily even the major-domos and the tiring-maids may take on signorial modes and manners! Oblige me!"

The Marchese laughed loud and long. Donna Lucetta shrugged her shoulders and gave a little grimace.

"You think," she said, "that after deliberately throwing away the loaf, we ought to be thankful for any crumbs we can collect?"

"Precisely," said the Freiherr.

"We thank you," said Capoameno, with a low obeisance. "Pray plead our cause with his Grace."

## IV

"Very well, my dear Theodor," said Bruno, in reply to the Freiherr's suggestion. "Mam'zelle is a most estimable woman, and" — with an appreciable swelling of grandeur — "I am willing to take any step to insure her against the slightest embarrassment. Even were she not a friend of yours" —

"Dear me!" murmured the Freiherr; "a friend of mine." He noticed, too, that Bruno had called him Theodor, — for the first time.

Still it was evident that Bruno saw none too clearly the reason for such sudden solicitude about Mam'zelle's sensibilities. Mam'zelle, as far as he had observed during those three days at Messina, had knocked about with a good deal of freedom — sometimes with the two men, sometimes alone. She had seen everything she wanted to see and had gone everywhere she wanted to go, had shaped a sturdy course alike by daylight and dark, and all the time taken thoroughly good care of herself. "Rather late for such delicate scruples," thought Bruno.

However, he liked Mam'zelle almost as much as von Kaltenau liked her. Her interest in things kept up even after his own had begun to flag; her enthusiasm plashed like a perennial fountain over gardens, galleries, churches, scenery, street-life, and everything else, and washed away the last touch of the grimy, the commonplace, the sordid, the over-familiar. But what pleased him more than all was the unceasing homage of Mam'zelle's gratitude. Mere civil toleration was something for her to be thankful for; the slightest act of kindness was enough to startle her; while he who did for her a studied, conscious favor must be agile indeed to get himself away from before gratitude's opening floodgates. "Really," said Bruno, in one of his least egotistical moments, "I hardly see how she could have come along so far without receiving more appreciation."

On Mam'zelle's account, then, Bruno agreed to receive certain members of his household staff at his own table. "Let them dress as well as they know how, and let them confer upon themselves such titles as they please — though I should prefer to have no one above the rank of count. But little Lucetta shall have *carte blanche;* I shall be very glad to see what the young minx can do. She may call herself whatever she pleases, and wear anything that she can lay her hands on."

Mam zelle first met her host and her fellow-guests at dinner. And among these was one more pilgrim from the north. For just at twilight, a

tall yellow cart, painted with the loves of Rinaldo and Armida, cast a wheel before the gates of Belriguardo, and the vetturino begged on behalf of his employer the hospitality of the coachyard and the services of a smith. The occupant of the vehicle, a tall grave personage, leaned composedly against a barrow while the work of repair went on. He gave no account of himself, and would have passed on unrecognized had not the Freiherr, by some happy chance, found himself in that remote quarter of Bruno's new possessions. Though the traveler was without his legal gown and showed no wine-stain on his cheek, the Freiherr detected him for Dottore Balanzoni of the Italian Comedy, and smiled at recollection of the Astrofiammante ball, and laughed for thought of Filippo, and gave the newcomer a hearty welcome.

At this first dinner Mam'zelle received a pleasing impression, and made one. She had brought her portmanteau with her, after all. It had hung on the other side of the donkey, where, while out of sight, it had formed the suitable counterweight to Mam'zelle herself; and it yielded, through some pre-dated miracle of packing, a costume that would pass muster on such an occasion, — a frock of somewhat naïve brilliancy and an unexceptionable pair of boots.

The dinner moved on in formal, stately fashion, and Mam'zelle, who had never before in her life come within miles of private splendor, — she had always seen her palaces by paying fees, — luxuriated

in the beauty of all the appointments, particularly the candelabra, and in the slow pomp of the service. Most of her fellow-guests were quiet persons, who looked down a good deal at their plates; their dress and their manner made them seem like poor connections receiving the bounty of an opulent lord. Particularly did the costumes of Filippo and his sister carry out this idea. They had entered upon the second stage of their masquerade with renewed gusto, and had attempted to express the last refinements of shabby gentility. Filippo founded his efforts upon a cast-off suit borrowed from his wondering *credenziere;* Lucetta appeared in a marvel of frazzled dowdiness that a former maid had disdainfully left behind. They slyly looked at each other askant, wondering if, after all, they had made any appreciable advance.

The Freiherr was soon deep in talk with Balanzoni; while Bruno — oh, gracious condescension! — confined his observations altogether to Mam'zelle. None of the other ladies came in for any attention from him, save perhaps the Baronessa Spazzola, as the Marchesina had joyfully elected to denominate herself. She was extraordinarily pretty and captivating, in spite of her dreadful gown, but Bruno determined to save his appreciation until it could be declared with more freedom than at a dinner-table.

Filippo stole quiet looks of extreme amusement as Bruno sat at the head of the table and ordered the feast. "The young cub was born to it," he

whispered across to the Freiherr; "he beats me on my own ground!" Then his head fell into his hand, and he gave a stifled groan: he had heard Bruno ordering up, through a terrified butler, the choicest, most historical vintage of his cellar.

## V

"I had been saving up those bottles for the past fifteen years," sighed Filippo. He was sitting on the edge of a fountain-basin, and the morning sun came shooting athwart the empurpled Judas-tree overhead.

"Try to bear up," returned the Freiherr. "I knew we should devastate you. But it will not be for long. Belriguardo is merely the first of many estates we shall ravage. The locusts come, but they pass on. We shall continue our good work as soon as our itinerary comes to be a little more distinctly marked out. But your aunt enjoyed that wine — I know she did!"

"You have conferred with his men of business?" asked Capoameno, with comical solicitude.

"Yes, things are moving — they are shaping themselves. His rights are perfectly clear; within a week or more he can lay full hands on his own."

"Consult my men of business, too," cried Filippo. "Let me send for them; let me write; let them interest themselves in your behalf. I want my chance at the Montegrifone wine-cellars; I want to eat up the green things in the Montegrifone fields."

"You shall have your revenge. Let your people help ours, and then perhaps we can move on before stripping you perfectly bare!"

Toward sunset more locusts arrived — a large flock of them. At that hour a train of coaches paused before the gates of Belriguardo, and a courier, after a short volley of loud and confident knocks, demanded shelter for his party for the night. The important air of the man and the state in which his party travelled brought the entire household to the gates. The courier threw open the door of the handsomest of the coaches, and —

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" cried the Lady of Quality to Bruno and the Freiherr, "we meet again, indeed!" Nothing could exceed her surprise and pleasure. She gave each of them a hand at the same moment. Then she withdrew her hand from the Freiherr and gave Bruno both. "Ah!" she cried, "you have come into your own most bravely! And it is *your* hospitality that I have ventured to ask!"

Filippo, leaning against one of the great gateposts, glanced at the Freiherr and said never a word.

Meanwhile the coaches were emptying themselves. Maids and grooms descended, and the impedimenta of a great personage and her dependents began to pile up in the road. And behind all this some one presently noticed a modest group of three persons who huddled together in a depre-

catory way, wondering to how wide a measure the influence of their patroness might be stretched.

Von Kaltenau, glancing casually in that direction, recognized in one of them the young novelist who had entertained him on the way to Taranto. The others, recognized at the same moment by both the Freiherr and Bruno, were the curious pair whom they had met on the water-front at Naples, the loquacious painter and the dumb poet.

"My little court," began the Lady of Quality. "Wealth should encourage the arts. What! you know one another? You are acquainted already?"

"Madam," said Bruno, gravely, "you are a remarkable woman."

"Why? Because I have pushed this enterprise so far into the South? But surely I must see my niece! And why were brigands abolished, pray, if not that I might indulge my whim? Besides, we have pistols in our holsters, and a carbine in every carriage."

"Madam," said Filippo, advancing with the greatest courtesy, "I beg to assure you of your perfect safety."

The lady bowed markedly. Bruno flashed an indignant look upon his major-domo for such presumption. Filippo, with a despairing glance at the Freiherr, leaned limp against his gatepost, and the Lady of Quality stood convicted of having bestowed an unnecessary degree of graciousness upon a very inferior person.

## VI

Dinner, that evening, was a brilliant function. Not so much from the costumes of Mam'zelle and the Marchesina, who wore merely what they had worn the evening before, with some minor embellishments added; nor from the efforts of the newly-arrived among the men, who seemed a little too tired and too strange to be at their ease; but from the ravishing exertions of the Lady of Quality, who supplied all deficiencies by dressing for ten and talking for twenty. Mam'zelle looked and listened with the pleased astonishment of a child; never had her generous ideal of a grande dame been half so well realized. The affluent personality of this newcomer cast such a brilliancy as quite to obliterate the minor drawbacks of the spectacle: the humility of the poor relations fed by Bruno's bounty, and the growing abstractedness of Bruno himself. He sat half the time deep in a brown study, and the Freiherr, at the other end of the table, well knew why.

"I shall go back to-morrow," said Bruno, a little later, following von Kaltenau out upon the terrace. "I shall go back to Palazzo Astrofiammante, and back to her. I have delayed too long, already; everything to-day has combined to remind me of my duty. Everybody comes, and she remains away, kept under lock and key by her cruel father. The woman comes who helped me

to hold out against Malevento; the very men come whose hands held her back from the sea. I shall go. I shall know now what to say. At last I am all that I should be and have all that I should have to make a final offer of myself and my possessions. You, my dear Theodor, shall hold my place here till I return."

"Wait a few days," counselled the Freiherr, hoping that a little coöperation between Bruno's own men of law and Filippo's might smooth out the last complication in the new duke's affairs.

"I go to-morrow," insisted Bruno; "to-morrow morning. I will not leave her longer with those cruel jailers. I will not risk the possible presence of Malevento — I feel within the very depths of my being that he has followed on."

Next morning the whole household assembled to bid the gallant Bruno godspeed on his way. At the very moment of his departure a lettiga borne by two white mules issued from a bypath and emerged upon the highway. A well-known face looked through the window with an expression of curiosity, then of surprise, then of joy, then of imperiled dignity. The youth astride the forward mule jumped down at a sign from Bruno, and flung the door of the lettiga open. Two women alighted. The one was Monna Clotilde, the sombre tragedy-queen of Bitonto. The other was Violante, daughter of the Astrofiammanti.

## VII

Bruno sprang to the ground instantly and advanced toward Donna Violante with all the fine insouciance of a light tenor, and with all of that vocal hero's indifference to the presence of a large company ready to witness his doings, and to comment in concord upon the emotional situation, — a situation, indeed, that suggested an ensemble in the middle act of some operetta. A varied troupe, in truth, had poured out through the great gates of Belriguardo and grouped itself about the lettiga: Filippo, now in a gnawing rage at the thought that he must appear at so cruel a disadvantage before a young person of such supreme and exquisite distinction; Lucetta, who, while willing to make herself a grotesque before so uncouth a woman as Mam'zelle or so elderly a one as the Lady of Quality, was on the point of treason and rebellion at the notion of keeping up her absurd attitude before another beauty as young and high-born as herself; the Lady of Quality and her little court, who caught at this rencontre with the prehensile eyes of artists and stared in the open hope that some rich emotional upheaval would ensue at once; Mam'zelle Hedwig, already mentally prostrate before the beauty and the commanding mien of the travel-worn young patrician, whose play of expression was so varied as to leave everybody in doubt as to her precise state of mind,

and to the issue of the encounter; Dottore Balanzoni, who recognized the youthful divinity of the ball at Rome and felt achingly the triumphal descent of beauty and passion to this dusty, weary, time-worn earth; Theodor von Kaltenau, who at last met face to face the innamorata of his ardent young guide and protégé; and a chorus of grooms, gardeners, maids, footmen, and unspecified guests — persons who, at such a stage, appear (for the first time, perhaps) in the background, — persons whose names may not be found on the printed bill of the play, whose coming is not anticipated, and whose presence is not explained. They supplement the cobalt skies, the rich greens of subtropical foliage; they wear costumes that pass readily enough at the back, and they swell the volume of sound with an impersonal unanimity.

Bruno stepped forward quickly toward Violante, and extended his eager hands. Violante made no definite response. She looked about her, moving her head slowly in a stately and self-possessed fashion, as if to measure the meaning of such an encounter at such a time and place before committing herself to any of its consequences. "Violante, Violante!" murmured Bruno, catching at her hands. But Violante's eyes still swept the crowd; she made it plain that their affair was at once too intimate and too complicated to be adjusted in the general public view. It therefore devolved upon Bruno, as lord of the manor, to disperse the throng with an easy and imperious wave

of the hand — to spread abroad the spirit of prompt docility that sends the chorus rolling in two equal waves to the wings, that causes the minor principals to follow with a little more leisure, dignity, and eye to effect, and that leaves the ground free to Him and to Her, with their respective confidantes (retired up, perhaps, to a suitable distance), — in this case Monna Clotilde and Theodor von Kaltenau.

## VIII

"Violante!" repeated Bruno, ardently, clasping the girl's hand and looking intently into her face. "What brings you here?"

"What brings *you* here?" asked Violante.

"What brings me here? My good fortune, my star, my right. And what brings me here keeps me here. For I have come into my own. These gates are mine, those servants were mine, those guests were mine. And now *you* are come, — one guest the more, — the last, the best" —

"Hah!" emitted Monna Clotilde, in her deep, bell-like tone, — a tone fraught with so much meaning that it was impossible for the Freiherr to overlook it.

Monna Clotilde, he perceived, was now quite another woman. The dejection and aimlessness that had marked her manner on their first meeting were gone. She seemed to have found a new interest in life — some new object upon which to

concentrate her scattered forces. He recalled her desire to take into her empty and discouraged hands the task of moulding some young life; and he wondered if Donna Violante, whose tone and expression seemed too severe for her years and even for her noble type of beauty, were the victim — for it would be nothing less — destined to be sacrificed in Monna Clotilde's last determined effort to regain her zest for living.

"I know what brings you here!" proceeded Bruno, ignoring Violante's companion, whom he took simply for her duenna. "Confess it. Come," he went on fatuously, "say that you came here to find me!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Donna Violante, scornfully.

"Impossible!" echoed Monna Clotilde, in the tone of a teacher approving the reply of a pupil.

"How could I know you were here?" demanded Violante.

"How, indeed?" repeated Clotilde.

"Have you ceased to care for me?" asked Bruno.

"Have *you* ceased to care for me?" asked Violante.

"Ceased!" he cried. The Freiherr checked the impetuous advance he was about to execute. "Tell me, at least, then, why you have left your home."

"I left home to escape tyranny, persecution; the tyranny of harsh and self-seeking parents, the persecution of a distasteful suitor."

"And there were other injuries no less hard to bear," contributed Monna Clotilde, with a hearty relish: "the negative injuries of neglect, indifference, forgetfulness!"

"Persecution? Distasteful suitor?" cried Bruno, overriding Monna Clotilde's observations. "You mean — Malevento?"

"I mean Malevento."

"We mean Malevento," repeated Clotilde. "And we mean you."

"He followed after you from Naples?"

"Yes."

"You deceiv— you misled me. You told me he cared nothing for you."

"He is one of the kind not to care when no one else cares, and to care greatly when he hears that another does."

"How did he learn that I — that I cared?"

"From my foolish, spiteful mother."

"In Naples?"

"Yes; and followed you southward when he learned that you had followed me."

"And you have seen him since? Where?"

"Where?" repeated Violante, with a touch of temper. "Where else than under my father's own roof? — a spot, it seems, easily reached by one, yet wholly inaccessible for another; a feat simple for him, but impossible for you!"

"You wrong me!" cried Bruno. "I stood inside your house but a few days ago. I spoke to your father face to face beneath his own roof! I swear it."

"They never told me," faltered Violante.

Monna Clotilde felt the situation weakening; it must be sustained. "When Malevento came," she declared, "his coming was known to one and to all. He did not say he came — he had no need to swear; he was seen and felt. But he will never be seen again by us," she continued, in a strain of vindictive triumph; "and he will make himself felt no more in the young life now within my keeping!"

A round of applause was clearly due; but Bruno merely stared at this intrusive person as one little to be preferred to Violante's own mother.

"They did not tell me," repeated the girl, in a contrite tone.

"I said to him all there was to say — I told him all there was to tell: what I was and what I was to be. He laughed in my face!" cried Bruno, with a grand and ample gesture toward his gates, his terrace, his tower. Von Kaltenau flushed.

"They did not tell me," said Violante yet again, drooping her head and fastening a self-reproachful look upon the ground.

"And what is more," continued Bruno, gallantly pursuing his advantage, "just as you came up I was on the point of setting out to see you once again. Evening would have found me beneath your window. I swear it!"

"I swear it!" echoed the Freiherr, finally conscious that, as a second, he was showing himself much inferior to Monna Clotilde. "I swear it,"

he repeated. "Ever since our Montegrifone has been in — in possession here, all his thoughts have been of you, and every day of delay in seeing you has" —

"It is all mine," said Bruno, with another grand backward sweep of the arm; "and it shall all be yours." He motioned toward the gateway. "Come in."

"Impossible," said Violante, drawing away in the direction of the lettiga.

"Impossible," said Monna Clotilde, conscious of the dawning danger for her ascendancy.

"Why impossible?" asked the Freiherr of Violante. "You are not alone."

"Impossible," murmured Violante.

"You are not our only guests."

"Impossible."

"We have a houseful of friends — you saw them. Among them are several ladies of mature years and complete discretion" —

"Impossible."

"You have one of the — of the same character with you" —

"Impossible."

Bruno laughed loudly. "Come in," he repeated. "That is your only course. I am keeping open house, and why should I throw myself open to all the world if you, and you alone, are to be excluded?"

"We will go on to the town," murmured Violante. "We will find some inn" —

"*That* is impossible. You would find the food impossible, the beds impossible, the company impossible. Come."

Violante looked toward Clotilde, who, resenting this attack on the integrity of an influence that was to be hers and hers alone, gave no sign of encouragement.

"It is quite impossible," the girl murmured once more.

Then Bruno took her by the hand, and she, with a look for reassurance toward Theodor von Kaltenau, let go her hold on the door of the lettiga; and then, as the step was quite impossible, she took it. She allowed Bruno to lead her in through the great gateway, and Monna Clotilde followed with the Freiherr.

## IX

Von Kaltenau was happy. His combination was now — at least in so far as concerned his own aims — complete. He lent to the approaching concords such an ear as is lent by the ravished amateur who has just added the last and most exquisite of all the pipes to his organ. He leaned back at ease as does the stoker who, having manfully heaved the coal into his furnace, pauses to feel the warmth and to take the glow upon his face. Bruno now stood complete — pipes, pedals, stops, and all, and had nothing to do but sing. Filled to the brim with hopes of future bliss and

aflame with all the pride of love and pleasure and mastery, it should be easy enough for him to shed the palpitating warmth abroad and to spread the red glow of joy far and wide. What he had done in a small way at Rome he was now to do in a larger way in Sicily. The world should again take on new shape, life, and color, and everythiug should once more seem worth the while.

Bruno trod the earth as a young god treads the clouds; his being, newly attuned, drew fresh harmonies from sea and sky and grove, and doubled the odorous beauty of advancing spring that now rioted amongst magnolias and oleanders and pomegranates, and reveled through the thickets of myrtle and acacia that overhung the steep beds of hastening rivulets. The broad terrace flowered with camellias and aloes in their great earthen pots; the garden plats beneath bloomed with euphorbias and asphodels and hyacinths and the gallant red trumpetings of the hibiscus; the fields and the olive groves were sprinkled with violets and anemones and cyclamen and the yellow oxalis, and the crannied walls were hung with the purple flowers of the pendent caper-plant. Day by day the sky and the sea kept an inviolate pact of unflecked and unruffled serenity; night after night the stars shone soft and clear and the moon grew bigger in the east. And by morning light and by twilight dusk and by moonlight sheen, two young lovers, proud of themselves and of each other, walked abroad and abreast through this enchanted

domain, that new life and new interest and new pleasure might be infused into the Kosmos for those poor souls astray in the drear and sandy tract of the desolate middle years.

Under the influence of the beauties of Belriguardo, of the glories of the Sicilian spring, of the intoxication produced by the sight of ardent youth happy in its love, many of the way-worn pilgrims from the North came to the point of abandoning their quest: the Last Refuge was here. Dottore Balanzoni acknowledged that his longings were almost appeased; the Lady of Quality declared that with the sight and the company of such a noble young pair her ambitions were pretty nearly realized. The painter and the novelist followed Donna Violante like a pair of hounds in leash, striving to catch and to secure the last fine shades in the color-symphony of human felicity. The dumb Colossus from the North one day broke through his cerements and surprised himself and the company with a brief, though exquisite poem — the first he ever wrote, and the last.

Violante had been rather perturbed to find these persons among the company at Belriguardo, but she soon regained her composure; that mad moment at Naples was now too far behind, too far away, for mention or even for thought. If Bruno had not saved her then, he dignified and glorified her now. She found him exquisite in his slender, supple grace, in the rush of his unabashed ardor, in his new-found dignity of a grand seigneur doing

the honors of this romantic domain. She even dwelt caressingly upon his name — a name that Giacinto Malevento, during one period of his persecutions, had accused of a lack of gentility. "Bruno!" he had cried scornfully; "a name for a bravo crouched behind a wall, or for a vine-dresser busy with his pruning-knife!" But Violante would linger upon the name in a very ecstasy of fondness. Its barbaric brevity, its possibly plebeian cast — these stood so well for ardor, momentum, mastery; if it grew near the ground it had the fresh vigor and flavor of the soil itself. It was a name to fill her idle moments by day and her open-eyed moments at night.

In any event her own patrician appellation was more than sufficient to maintain a proper average. Her beauty, too, her temperament, her carriage — all these assisted her to tour through her new province with regal mien, and to secure the homage due a queen upon her progress. Everybody coöperated. The Lady of Quality opened her abundant coffers that regalia might not fail, and even poor Filippo would now and then smile his rueful smile and admit that his ill-judged abdication was not without its recompenses.

## X

All were pleased — save one. The little Marchesina was finding the strain too hard to bear. Her lively, sunny nature was under a cloud. Her

sense of the ridiculous was in abeyance. The situation irked her. More, irksomeness had given way to impatience, and impatience to pique, and pique to anger; the storm was almost ready to burst. To be put at such a cruel disadvantage in the very hour she most required free exercise of her powers! To be a masquerading servant in her brother's house while another woman, no younger, no more beautiful, no better born, made her fantastic entry to rule as chatelaine! To be snubbed or ignored before the assembled company her brother fed and lodged by an arrogant young impostor who half the time did not trouble to keep up a decent feint of the comedy they were playing! She had found him hard to bear before the arrival of Donna Violante, but how much harder did she find him now! Then, at least, he had noticed her, had admired her, had had words for her. For example, there was that moonlit night when he had followed her out upon the terrace, and had frankly and unceremoniously set forth his admiration of her face and figure. True, the entire proceeding had been tremendously *de haut en bas* — for he had taken the tone of a very grand gentleman toward a very minor actress; but it had at least given her the opportunity to wrench his remarks round to a distant and perverted appreciation of her real quality. Bruno had been taken — who would not be? — by her sprightly, tripping gait; by her saucy little nose which forgot its dignity at the last moment to become tip-tilted in just the least degree; by

the arch, coquettish smile that she had copied from Susanna, in the "Marriage of Figaro," and had employed circumspectly on one or two private occasions. But now the Countess Almaviva herself was come — statelier, taller, more serene, more regal, more imposing; and poor little Susanna found herself pushed quite aside. The Marchesina — lady's-maid, poor relation, what not — made moan to her brother.

"I can stand it no longer — not a single day!" Indignant tears started in her eyes.

Filippo frowned blackly. "That graceless cub! — has he been — has he been taking — liberties with you?"

"No, not exactly. No, I won't quite say that. But I am sure that if I were — if I were myself, I should get more attention from him, and a — a different sort of attention."

Filippo laughed. "Your own fault! And if I had let you have your own way completely, you would be scouring pans and kettles in the kitchen this very hour!"

Lucetta made a dreadful little grimace.

"But," went on Filippo, resuming his air of gravity, "if I were to hear of his doing or saying anything essentially improper, or even inconsiderate, I should" —

"Yes, yes, I know; you would punish him. An easy thing to do. He can be thoroughly punished at a moment's notice; not only punished — crushed, annihilated. He is on a thin lava-crust;

he stands on the gallows with the noose round his neck" —

Filippo's essential good nature came uppermost. "I should not want to swing him off from Belriguardo before he can arrange to fall on his feet elsewhere. We must pay for our foolish impulse by a few more days of this ignoble existence!"

## XI

Bruno, meanwhile, unconscious of the slender basis of mere suffrage upon which rested his grandeur and all his happiness, present and future, began to rack his brains for new rituals by which to show homage to the lady of his preference. All this time the scattered ruins of the little Greek town below them were still strewing the heights of the headland. Bits of entablature or of stylobate mingled with the rugged growths of palmetto and prickly-pear; fragmentary pavements peeped out here and there through banks of asphodel or tangles of curling acanthus leaves of glossiest green; and at the sunset hour loiterers on Belriguardo's broad terrace would catch upon the three or four remaining columns of the great temple itself the ruddy glow that detached them still more vividly from the unbroken blue of the sea behind. Yes, the temple was there, — and even the foundations of the altar. To these he must add the divinity, the priest, the ceremonial.

"What god shall we honor?" he once asked

the company assembled on the terrace in the early twilight. "Before what divinity shall we light our fires, sing our hymns, perform our dances, lay our offerings? Who will speak?"

"Let it be Hope," said Balanzoni, wistfully. "Upon the altar of such a goddess would I willingly pour a libation."

"Hope?" repeated Bruno. He looked at Violante.

"Let it be Beauty," suggested Mam'zelle, shyly.

"Beauty?" exclaimed Bruno, after her. He looked at Violante.

"Let it be Glory," pronounced the Lady of Quality, with the dignity of a Roman empress.

"Glory?" He looked at Violante.

"Let it be Nemesis," muttered Monna Clotilde, darkly.

"Nemesis?" He looked at Violante — like a protector.

"Let it be Art," suggested the painter.

"Art!" exclaimed Bruno, impatiently. "Rather, let it be Love," — he looked at Violante once again — "Love, the god that" —

"No, no," broke in the Freiherr. "Let it be Youth — youth, the one, the sole divinity — the strong young god that ever freshens and illumines this worn old earth and creates in every new heart the miraculous belief that our few years here are to be worth the efforts we make to prolong them. Let the rest go; light your fires before Youth, pour out your richest libations, pipe out the fullest

sweetness stored within your double pipes; make any sacrifice to keep it, for no sacrifice can ever bring it back. No lustration save the bath of youth will wash away the grime of the middle years; no illuminant save the torch of youth will drive back the dark shades that gather round us long before the end. Crown yourselves with myrtle and laurel and pray with upraised arms that the sun may stand still for but a single day — 't were vain to ask for more; for the divine sanctuary of youth is the Last Refuge, and even that can harbor us only too short a time. Youth includes all: Beauty, Love, the Hope and Glory of the world. And let this ever-fleeting, ever-renewing divinity of youth be served by youthful priest; no brow upon which disillusion has ever weighed shall wear her laurel; no heart that enthusiasm has deserted shall stand beside her pedestal; no eyes that disenchantment has dulled shall look up into her face. Let such a priest minister before the statue, while the rest of us, we weary, world-worn mortals, humbly prostrate ourselves in the outer court."

During these words, Violante, who had uttered never a syllable, looked shyly once or twice at Bruno; Bruno, throughout, looked at Violante full steadily and unabashed. The entire company accepted Youth as the one, the sole divinity, and the question simply became this: Shall the divinity be a god ministered to by a priestess, or a goddess ministered to by a priest? The question remained

open, even on the next morning, when the whole company, clad in chlamys and himation and bearing oak branches, picked their sandal-footed way down to the temple; nor even when they were grouped around the altar did the general indecision end. The women (who wished to serve as priestesses) urged Bruno to take his stand upon the battered capital that was to serve the divinity for a pedestal. The men (who would fain be priests) begged Violante to lose no time in assuming the same place, that the ritual of adoration might begin. But Violante, blushing divinely, extended her white arms toward Bruno, and raised her golden cup, as if to offer a libation. And Bruno, with pride sparkling in his enkindled eye, took his basket of first-fruits from the hands of Donna Lucetta and made as if to lay it before Violante's shrine. Complete confusion prevailed; no understanding could be reached. The white heifer, with wreathed and gilded horns, strolled away and began to browse among the fennel and acanthus; and the Freiherr, with a faint sigh, rested the sacrificial axe against a bit of broken cornice. Neither object of this common worship would take precedence, and the little company returned to Belriguardo under the pall of utter failure.

"Youth, youth!" murmured the Freiherr; "as indomitable in its sacrifices as in its hopes and enthusiasms!"

## XII

Bruno's youthful elasticity soon recovered from the disappointment attending this ceremonial, and he began to form plans for another. The second, too, was designed to honor Donna Violante. The first had taken place in a temple; this one was to take place at Belriguardo itself. The first had been conceived in the spirit of antiquity; the second was to be carried out in the spirit of the middle ages. His failure had been Greek; his success was to be Saracenic.

Sicily! swept by every breeze that ripples the Mediterranean! Sicily! fruitful soil in which seed from every quarter has found a lodging! Above all, the seed of Arabic poesy, borne hitherward in circuitous sweep through Moorish Spain and gay Provence, and nurtured by Norman chivalry and later gathered a hundredfold by Tuscan sonneteers to be spread broadcast through the world. Bruno pined for a concourse of troubadours and dreamed of a Court of Love. Belriguardo should be the Favara of to-day — Favara, where the great Hohenstaufen had held his cultured, cosmopolitan sway; where poets and painters and philosophers had come flocking to entertain the court beauties, Christian and Mohammedan alike; where the delights of the South and the East conjoined in fullest, most ideal union; and where the opening bud of Italian poetry was coaxed

forward by the dexterous hand of the accomplished Frederick himself. To Favara should be added Granada and Toulouse, and eke the canorous choir of Valdarno. There should be cansos and tensons and baladas and aubades and pastoretas; and the songs sung by this newest consistory of the "gay science" should all be in honor of one whom he should wisely choose.

This court of love required a queen. There was no ambiguity here; there should be no dispute as to primacy; the queen should have no opportunity to draw back at the very foot of the throne. In his mind's eye Donna Violante already sat there in state.

He issued a mandate exacting a tribute of poems. It was like a tax laid by the royal treasury, and no one was to escape. He himself should write, and none must think of failure. He urged the Freiherr to serve him with Dottore Balanzoni, whose gravity he himself hardly dared attack. Von Kaltenau took Balanzoni aside — (Balanzoni was not his real name, for he had brought a much better one from Leyden, but it is too late to make the change now) — von Kaltenau, I say, took Balanzoni aside, and asked him to bear his part in a tenson. "A tenson," explained the Freiherr, "is a sort of poetic combat, in which opposing sides discourse on the philosophy of chivalrous love. Enter the combat, I conjure you, as you are a philosopher! Bring back to mind the philosophic and artistic glories of your own land. Live, live,

— as you have so long wanted to live. Break loose! Soar! Palpitate! What better Refuge can you find than the refuge offered here?"

The romancer also promised to contribute, and to do as well as he could in a vehicle not properly his; the Lady of Quality, too, said that she came from a clever land where everybody was expected to turn his hand to everything, and that they might count upon her for a roundelay of some kind or other. The dumb poet, having broken his silence once, might be expected, of course, to do it again. Monna Clotilde said she could not write a poem, but that she should be glad to recite one written by anybody else: if her personal preference were consulted, the love she lent her voice to celebrate would be an unhappy love. Mam'zelle Hedwig had been seen carrying a small bottle of violet ink across the courtyard and along the terrace, and was felt to be engaged in the fabrication of something very choice and graceful and independent. The painter, who had no powers in verse, promised to put the session of the consistory on canvas.

Capoameno was one of the readiest and most accomplished versifiers in Sicily. He approached Bruno one morning very humbly and asked to be allowed to participate.

"Certainly," said Bruno, with the most gracious condescension. "Write something, by all means. To such a queen in such a court the praises of high and low alike are due. But you will under-

stand that your piece need not be very long, nor too impassioned. Let your own good sense and good taste guide you."

"Thanks, Excellency," said Filippo, bowing humbly as he slunk away.

## XIII

The Court of Love was held on the great terrace of Belriguardo one morning in earliest April. The sky was cloudless, the sea was unruffled, save for the lightest breeze, and the beams of mid-spring's enkindling sun were shut off by the great bulk of the Roman tower. To the terrace camellias were added branches of laurel and oleander, and festoons of myrtle and smilax clung along the lichened balustrade. Donna Violante sat enthroned under a canopy of cloth-of-gold; Bruno stood beside her on the lowest step; and the rest of the company, decked out in the accumulated spoils of the centuries, grouped themselves about the presiding figure in the similitude of a court of the old Norman-Arabic days. The painter, dressed as Count Raymond's favorite troubadour, was enchanted. He was in the picture, and he was out of it. He could take it subjectively; he could take it objectively. He cried for brushes and canvas and felt himself on the threshold of a triumphant masterpiece.

"I have found the Last Refuge, in very truth," he said. And he looked again at the glorious young couple in frank and unrestrained delight.

A court of love has its distinctly judicial aspect, and the proceedings opened with a philosophical discussion on the nature of love — a matter upon which the presiding spirit and her attendant ladies were expected to deliver a judgment. The two disputants were Dottore Balanzoni and the Freiherr of Kaltenau. One's verses maintained that love was unselfishness; the other's, that love was selfishness itself. No one knew, however, the author of either poem; for the two scrolls were dropped into a hat, and each one read the poem he drew out. Judgment was reserved.

The forms of legal procedure partly satisfied, the session moved on in a freer spirit. The Lady of Quality, being perfectly prosperous and happy, and thoroughly contented under domestic arrangements of her own devising, put together a mournful little ditty about a broken heart. This was recited with tragic emphasis by Monna Clotilde, and every one was much affected.

The dumb singer from the Northland had been unable to produce a second poem, and so repeated his first. He stood forth with his sheet grasped in his great bony hands and read his tender little lines in a voice like the roaring north wind hushed.

The Marchese hurried rapidly and humbly through his bit of verse; everybody saw that he was embarrassed and none too desirous of pushing himself before his betters. "However," said the Lady of Quality, "I think a fine handsome fellow

like that might show a little more spirit. Nothing is so annoying as too great humility."

Capoameno had avoided passion as well as prolixity. He read a piece of ten or twelve lines. Nothing could have been more mischievous, more sardonic, more packed with secondary meanings. But only the Freiherr and the Marchesina understood them. When Bruno too came to understand them, in the light of subsequent events, they pricked him like red-hot needles.

Mam'zelle Hedwig now came forward and bashfully read her little sonnet in violet ink. It was fragrant with gratitude and prim with respectful homage. It was dedicated to a *preux chevalier* who rescued damsels in distress. The Freiherr smiled kindly as he listened. For the chevalier that Mam'zelle had in mind was clearly one who resisted the demands of extortionate porters and the advances of importunate cabmen, and who was gently considerate with single women who were past their first youth and defaced by the hard knocks of travel. Mam'zelle's innocent gratitude showed in her tremulous voice and her blushing cheeks. Everybody acknowledged her efforts with cordial applause, the Freiherr with the rest — to keep himself and herself in countenance. But Mam'zelle's humble tribute was come too late — as a little star that begins to shine near dawn. For daylight seemed breaking before the Freiherr's eyes and all that little stars could do would be to fade away.

Then Bruno. He stood at the foot of the throne and gave forth his homage with the abandon and momentum of a whirlwind. His eyes sparkled with pride, his brown and sinewy young hands trembled with passion, his whole slender frame dilated and vibrated as if the very god of poetry had descended upon him. His *canso* wedded the suave rhythms of the South to the barbaric impetuosity of the Servian highlands. It was all for her — for her, seated there upon the throne; let everybody see, let everybody hear. Donna Violante, blushing, panting, trembling, abashed, grew great and glorious in the eyes of all, as her self-abandoned worshipper decked her canopy with loves and graces, hurled into its farthest recess the white illuminative rays of passion, heaped up at her feet the multitudinous offering of an ardent and boundless devotion. The enthusiastic company broke out in loud applause; they stripped the terrace of its myrtles and camellias and showered them upon the poet and his lady. Only Theodor von Kaltenau held back. Bruno, still standing tall and straight, gave him one triumphal glance, and threw out his arms with the slightest turn of the head, as if to say:

"There she sits!"

The Freiherr had always had a great affinity for such abstractions as time and place: he could poetize an epoch and he could bestow an individual physiognomy upon a town. He had a deep sympathy for things, and sometimes even felt a like

sympathy for causes; but a sympathetic apprehension of men and women he had never greatly cultivated — this was his chief defect. The hour to bring the remedy had struck. The various happenings of his journey southward had served to rouse his dormant interest in actual life, and now a fuller revelation was at hand. What everybody saw he too must see. If the Marchesina could sink all jealousies and shower her queen with flowers, could he do less? If ancient Balanzoni were to be observed running hither and thither with trailing festoons of smilax in his hands, must he himself stand purblind and palsied? He had seen the goddess conducted to her pedestal; he had seen the queen seated upon her throne: what was there to delay the dawn?

The youth who had made all these glories visible still stood in his place and still seemed to say:

"There she sits!"

Von Kaltenau looked. Ingenuous, over-confident Bruno, who had shown him more than he had asked to see!

## PART V. — APPLES OF DISCORD

### I

BRUNO was delighted by the success of his court of love, and with his own part in it, nor would he acknowledge that the other ceremonial within the Greek temple had been in the slightest degree a failure. His histrionic tastes were now fully awakened, and his mimetic powers were growing with every fresh exertion. He therefore determined upon a third function that should quite eclipse the other two; he issued a decree for a costume ball that should serve as an epitome of Sicilian history, and should gather to one splendid focus all the glories of the Island.

He summoned Capoameno, and the Marchese, in his capacity of major-domo, promptly attended.

He gave the Marchese a series of minute, lavish and diversified instructions, including directions to prepare a list of the principal dignitaries and personages of the province.

"And I shall ask you too to take part," said Bruno, in conclusion, "as well as that young Lucetta. I shall know how to manage the Greek side of it, and the Carthaginian; and there will be plenty of people to do justice to the Saracens and

the Normans. But the more primitive period must be represented as well: I should like a pair of the early Sikelians to come down from their hilltop and mingle with the rest of us."

Filippo conveyed this command to his sister. The Marchesina flew into a passion.

"This is an outrage!" she cried. "It is more than I can stand! It is more than anybody could be expected to stand! I will go this very day to that presumptuous boy and say to him: Sir, you are a blind fool! This house is not yours, but my brother's. The escutcheon over the big archway is his. The wine that you have been spilling is his; the horses that you have been laming" —

"Not at all, my dear girl," interjected Filippo.

— "the forbearance that you have been abusing is his; only the blind folly and arrogance of it all is yours! You have set aside a better man than yourself in his own house, before his own guests; you have treated his sister with the familiar impudence due a kitchen-maid" —

"How, Lucetta? Do you mean that he" —

"No," said the Marchesina, "not exactly. In truth, the foolish, infatuated fellow won't look at me at all. But if he won't look, he shall listen!"

"My dear sister, your doing this is quite out of the question. Things have gone too far. A man may be dropped from a balloon at the height of twenty feet, but not at the height of a mile!"

"We are still to submit, then, are we? I am to be paraded about before Violante Astrofiam-

mante as a Sikelian savage, am I? What did the Sikelian savages wear? Skins? And did they have anything on their heads and their feet? And while we are paddling about in such a guise, Donna Violante and Montegrifone will be doing the beau rôles, I assure you. She will be Arethusa or Proserpine, or some great lady from the court of Hiero or of Roger, and he will follow her about as a Bras de Fer or an Alcibiades!"

"We must endure things for a few days longer. The end is in sight. Von Kaltenau says that the" —

"No, it is too much — still another disguise added to all the rest. The strain is becoming too great. Think of it! — persons of some consequence, we masquerade as servants; as servants, we are ordered to masquerade as gentry; and as pretended guests we are further required to run about in the wolf-skins and matted hair of the aboriginal islanders. Three disguises taken on one over the other! My brain gives out, along with my pride and my patience."

"The end is in sight, as I was saying. Von Kaltenau has taken this young man's affairs in hand, and they are all but arranged. He will know the precise truth about himself and his new belongings within a few days. This ball will be his last performance here, and within a week he will be in full possession of his own proper estates."

Lucetta sidled away, pouting; she seemed as if

improvising a step that should bring an early Sikelian maid — though much against her will — down from the tribal stronghold.

## II

Donna Violante was soon made to feel that she was expected to take a dazzling part in Montegrifone's coming *capo d'opera*. She listened quietly to all of Bruno's unbridled suggestions, and then talked them over with Theodor von Kaltenau.

This involved the spending of odd half-hours in the shade of the oleander grove near the great fountain, or under the tall group of stone pines that shadowed a marble bench just beneath one corner of the wide terrace. Bruno had opened his friend's eyes to the beauty of the world about him, and now his middle-aged pupil was beginning to perceive, though dimly, the interest to be got out of the people inhabiting it. Youth and beauty and ardor were making themselves felt.

Violante received von Kaltenau's measured attentions with much amiability and no scant measure of appreciation. She had been a good deal in the sun of late, and a little period of shadow was grateful. The sun is glorious and masterful and essential — it is the life and centre of the system wherein we hold our atomic place; but no one can stand an uninterrupted exposure to it through the long summer day. Bruno had blazed royally,

had burned down with an imperious fierceness. No passing cloud of diffidence had interposed to give even the briefest respite to the girl upon whom all the rays of his being converged, and who, faint and dazzled, now felt the need of a moment's shade. Theodor von Kaltenau offered it. She liked his cool, subdued manner; his measured voice, speaking of interests less exclusively personal than those that moved Bruno, rested her; and she was flattered to be addressed as a mature and serious person by a man so much her senior. It was pleasant to be able to abandon her hand for a moment upon the bench with some assurance that it would not instantly be caught up by an impulsive youth close beside her. It was agreeable to be allowed to adjust a flying lock at the nape of the neck without feeling that a pair of brown eyes and a pair of brown hands were instant to see and to assist. Von Kaltenau indeed saw the hand, abandoned to the kindred whiteness of the marble or raised to put the fluttering lock in place, and she knew that he saw it, and that he had only just begun to see it; but she felt sure that he was not preparing to dispute with her over her own mastery of it.

Bruno, with the scant ceremony of one whose rights were paramount, would now and then obtrude upon one of these slow, grave and quiet conferences, as it went on in its corner of the terrace or round the curb of the old Byzantine well. Then Theodor would nod and Violante would

smile and neither of them would be quick to bring their little talk to a close, or to give Bruno a definite share in it. Once, when he approached them in the courtyard, they greeted him without removing their elbows from the edge of the well or lifting their eyes from the fern-lined shaft down which they were both abstractedly looking. Such things disconcerted and irritated Bruno, and Monna Clotilde, who sometimes saw his incipient frown, could not restrain her ominous smile.

Bruno had frankly disliked the woman from the beginning, and now his vaguely-stirring need for some scapegoat opened his lips against her. "My dear Theodor," he said one day to von Kaltenau, "her presence here is no advantage." What she had done for Malevento, he may have thought she might do, too, for him.

"You are right," rejoined the Freiherr; "she is no suitable companion for Donna Violante. How did they meet?"

"The poor girl, on leaving home, took refuge in a church — frightened by her own impulsive action. They met there."

"Ha!" muttered the Freiherr; "a church once more. I could wish the woman well away from here," he added.

"Let me send her away," blurted out Bruno.

"If the one went, the other would not stay. With all her demerits, Clotilde is at least definitely a duenna. She will have to remain."

## III

Other eyes besides those of Monna Clotilde saw von Kaltenau's growing interest in Violante. Mam'zelle Hedwig now began to droop her eyelids plaintively and to give vent to small, patient sighs, and to feel it were well to let her little day-dream dissipate before its outlines should become too clear. There had been times when she had ventured on the arch and the coquettish with Theodor von Kaltenau, and when he had appeared to meet her more than half way; and young Bruno and others had lifted their eyebrows ever so slightly, and had seemed to look upon the gentle, gentle dalliance of such a pair as an instructive exhibition of middle-aged misjudgment, and as a living example of the error and the folly of picking up the component parts of life regardless of their proper succession. Yes, Theodor was right: the meal must be served in regular courses, the book must be read in regular order; the turning back of mature people upon the interests of youth was an awkwardness, an absurdity, — it led to contretemps, it led to laughter.

Deprived of the comfort of von Kaltenau's society, Mam'zelle began to turn her wide eyes upon Capoameno and to make her mature smile a little more decidedly his. The subordinate part played by so personable and well-mannered a man was still a mystery to her; though if he were but a

poor hanger-on of a great house her own modest merits, she may have thought, could ask for nothing more. Filippo met her advances admirably; though her northern gaucheries gave him endless entertainment, a great deal of tolerance went with his amusement, and no slight appreciation of her essential qualities.

"You might count for more here than you do," she said to him one day; having gained her own liberty, it pained her to see another still in subjection.

"I *have* counted for more than I do," he returned.

"You should place a higher value upon yourself."

"I have been taught the value of humility."

"Humility is not for you. Assert yourself. Lay hold on what you want."

"Everything has been taken. The beau rôle has been snatched away; I am nothing now but a conquered savage."

"Savage? I cannot grant that. I have never met a man more fully civilized. You can never come to savagery."

"Then the savages have come to me. They have borne down upon my civilization. At any rate, I am conquered — the victorious chief sets his foot upon my neck and raises a shout of triumph."

"We are the savages, then — we from the North? But the South will do what it has always

done for the barbarians: it softens them, it tames them; they remain, they cannot get away" —

Filippo gasped. A week or less, he had hoped, would see Belriguardo his own again.

— "the soft air enchants us; the blue sky, the bluer sea, delights us; the glorious vegetation of early spring transports us. The monuments invite us to study; the long procession of glittering dynasties absorbs us. We forget the gray skies that overhang our own bleak mountains; we forget the long, cold winter of the North. All is light, beauty, serenity, joy. Hearts are expansive; thoughts are kind. We feel that at last we have come into our own. This is what we have hoped for, dreamed of, longed for; we are here — here — here, — and who will drive us back?"

As Mam'zelle improvised this little rhapsody (which was to be set down in due time, in violet ink, like her previous production), she opened her wide virginal eyes more widely still upon wondering Filippo, and threw out her arms with a confiding gesture of modest and impersonal passion, and made it manifest that now at last her eyes saw the sights, her ears heard the sounds, her lungs breathed the very air that destiny, however thwarted, had from the first decreed. Filippo, much awed by this gothic expression of resolute tenacity, began to wonder whether Bruno's brief day would end so early after all, and whether Belriguardo were ever to lapse to the control of its proper master.

## IV

Meanwhile the entire household was deep in the study of myth, of legend, of history ancient and mediæval: the coming fête was to resume all that was most striking and brilliant in the long roll of the many-storied island. Bruno had determined to make himself the central figure of the pageant, and swept a quick eye over all the flotsam and jetsam with which the wreck of empires had strewn the Sicilian shores. He thought first of Hiero of Syracuse, the ideal Greek tyrant; Hiero, energetic, successful, refined, artistic, witty, popular — yet with the iron fist clenched within the velvet glove; Hiero, walking into the theatre, a tall, stately person in the short tunic of a warrior, with a regal circlet among his curling locks, and attended by a Pindar and an Æschylus . . . No, it was all too formidable, too grandiose; something simpler must be found. He thought of Alcibiades, the curled darling with the broad fillet on his scented locks, and the engaging lisp, and the profile of a statued god, and the gold-embroidered chlamys, — Alcibiades, who stood in the theatre of Catania and harangued the fascinated crowd while the Athenian fleet stole into their harbor . . . No, to be Alcibiades was to be an effeminate trickster. Let us have something more vigorous, more barbaric. He thought of Hannibal and of Himilco, and saw himself arrayed in a long black robe

flowered with gold; upon his head a coronet of pearls in many tiers, like a mitre; round his throat a necklace of dusky stones engraved with cabalistic signs; and to end with, bracelets and anklets of uncut gems. Then he threw himself upon a big-limbed Tunisian horse, — a beast shaved from head to tail, maneless, earless, with a silver horn set on his forehead; or he mounted into a brass tower on the back of some elephant with painted ears and a caparison wrought in tiny scales of bronze . . .

He laughed at the impossibility of realizing these African excesses and openly confessed to the assembled company his fear that the Carthaginian epoch in Sicilian history must go unrepresented. But aid came from an unlooked-for quarter. The Lady of Quality, who had shyly informed them a few days before that her given name was Sophonisba, now offered to support the weight of this historic appellation: she would appear, unless prevented, as the daughter of Hasdrubal and the wife of Syphax, and would carry through the mazes of the grand procession as much barbaric splendor as the part required.

"Good," cried Capoameno, jumping up in a moment of self-forgetfulness, and clapping his hands. "Carthage remains indestructible, after all!"

Bruno looked severely at the Marchese, as if he had transgressed the utmost bounds permitted, and poor browbeaten Filippo sank back into silence.

Then Bruno passed on, naturally enough, from the Carthaginians to the Romans. But the only

Romans who had made any great figure in Sicily were Marcellus, who wept over Syracuse before plundering it, and Verres, who plundered it without weeping over it at all. Then there was the Saracenic emir that had done as much at a later date, but nobody could recall his name.

Then came the young eagles of the Norman house of Hauteville, each fired with a lordly determination to clutch in his talons a kingdom all his own: Roger, Drogo, Robert, Raymond, Tancred, — turbulent, eloquent, romantic; bold, lighthanded robbers, with clanking coat of mail and sturdy round helmet and ponderous battle-axe. There were a round dozen of them. Which to choose?

Why not pass them all by and elect to be their great descendant, the Emperor Frederick the Second? — Frederick, Southron-born, for whom Sicily was always the favorite part of his empire, and for whom all men and all creeds were as one; Frederick, who spoke alike Greek, Arabic, Latin, and the new-formed Italian; Frederick, whose court was thronged with the miscreant beauties of the Mohammedan world, no less than by poets, artists, and philosophers, and who returned from his crusade against the Sultan of Egypt with a bevy of dancing-girls, the Sultan's own gift; Frederick, who spent the days in genial rivalry of poesy with his own sonneteering chancellor — ah, decidedly such would be a gallant, salient, brilliant figure! Then his consort. If Bruno were Frederick himself, why should not Violante —

But no; a moment's thought led to a moment's investigation. Frederick, it appeared, had had not one consort but four. And beautiful were their names, — Constance, Iolanthe, Isabella, Bianca, — but far too numerous. "So fickle, so forgetful!" said Bruno. "Let him pass."

Little seemed left now short of the Sicilian Vespers. But nobody cared to obtrude the thought of a massacre upon the festivities, and nothing remained but to begin at the beginning and go over the ground again. The earliest mythology yielded all at once the name of Acis.

"Acis — and Galatea," said Dottore Balanzoni.

"Yes, Acis and Galatea," croaked Monna Clotilde, from the edge of the group, as she glanced toward Theodor and Violante, who were seated a little apart in low-voiced converse; "and Polyphemus, rushing down the side of Ætna to hurl his rocks after them!"

## V

Violante showed herself willing to fall in with Bruno's ideas, whatever turn they might ultimately take; but she gave him acquiescence rather than enthusiasm — merely expressing a hope that the final arrangement would permit her to wear a simple classical costume, beyond which she hardly cared to go. Bruno, remembering the peplum she had worn at the ball in Rome, was far from interposing an objection, but he resented her lack of

positive enthusiasm: objection, controversy, even a little vulgar bickering would be better than this placid assent.

"You are losing your interest," he said reproachfully.

"Not at all," she rejoined.

"You don't care about pleasing me."

"Pleasing you?" repeated Violante, with a flash of the eye. "Does it not seem to you that I have done enough, even if I do not try to please you? It was a great deal for me to enter here, and a great deal more for me to allow myself to remain here."

"Forgive me," said Bruno. "But you care nothing for my ideas. Have you been getting ideas from — from some one else?"

"From whom?"

"From — from that painter. He follows you about all the time begging you to let him do your portrait" —

"Many others have done the same. And this one, surely, has claims to my consideration!"

"He had two hours of your time, yesterday. Has he begun work?"

"On a sketch."

"I know their ideas!" said Bruno, irritably. "While I was waiting up and down that jasmin-walk, he was filling your head full of bangles and jackets and fezzes and those flowing trousers" —

"And since I have decided to go in Greek dress, you may be sure that I have declined any such sug-

gestions. And if I go as a Greek, you ought to know why."

Bruno did know why: it was in memory of their first meeting. "But they all run after you," he went on pugnaciously. "They take your time; they demand your attention; they override the just claims of others. What do you find, for example, in that great uncouth creature who is always pursuing you through the garden, racking his hands and working his features, and trying to vent poems that never come?"

"He, too, is entitled to considerate treatment — from both of us."

"He never even wet his feet!" cried Bruno, angrily; "while *I* — why, I would have" —

"'Sh," said Violante, dropping her eyes for an instant. "And I suppose I have been receiving suggestions from him," she went on, — "even from the dumb?"

"No, no; but" —

"Then I am accepting a little attention, now and then, from that professor from Leyden, perhaps? — a grave, reticent person, old enough to be my father, almost my grandfather. Poor old gentleman! — do you think a little youth, a little pleasure, a little sweetness put into his life must be just so much taken out of yours?"

"I — I do not mean Dottore Balanzoni," stammered Bruno. "I never gave him a thought."

"Then you must mean that unaccountable individual who sits every evening at your table in a

shiny coat, and whom, despite his good looks and his charming manners — even if they are a little too subdued — you browbeat so unpityingly" —

"Ha!" cried Bruno; "that fellow! I should like to hear of *his* presuming in the slightest degree upon your favor. And if I should learn that you" —

"And now you are browbeating me!"

"Not at all! I never browbeat anybody! I never had the least thought of browbeating you!"

"You have been browbeating me for the last ten minutes. How much longer is it to last? How much longer do you think I will endure it?"

"And how much longer do you think I will endure your slighting of me and your open partiality for Theodor von" —

"Ah!" cried Violante. "It is Herr von Kaltenau, then? If that is the case, let me tell you what I think of him. I think he is a very estimable and interesting man. I like his gravity; I like his quietness. I like his ability to rise above trivial personalities. I like his way of treating me as a person of sense, and as if I were his equal — which heaven knows is far from the case — in discretion. I feel free to say that he pipes a very pleasant, restful little tune: must I have the drums and trumpets dinning in my ears continually?"

"Am I the drums and trumpets?"

"Yes, and the cymbals, too!"

"You shall enjoy silence at once!" he declared angrily, going.

"Foolish boy!" she exclaimed; "stay where you are — only quiet down this dreadful fortissimo."

But Bruno flung himself away in a rage; and after a short concluding measure filled out by rests, the interview came to an end with a double bar — one that delayed reconciliation for some hours.

## VI

For some time after this all mention of Acis and Galatea ceased. And when, that evening, poor Bruno, taking a moonlight stroll through his stately pleasance, came upon a well-remembered bower only to find Donna Violante and Theodor von Kaltenau seated there in easy yet self-absorbed converse, the abolition of all mythology seemed imminent and desirable. The roses rioted over the heads of this oblivious pair, and a nightingale, in some distant thicket poured forth its sympathetic passion; and Monna Clotilde, hovering near, smelt unwillingly at the flower-beds. Bruno rebelled; it was *his* bower, his moon, his rose-thicket, his nightingale. And the man who dared to call himself his friend had taken possession of this whole enchanting domain and even usurped a rightful lover's place. Bruno resolved to throw himself away — and upon the most abject creature within his ken.

Of course he had made a mistaken estimate of von Kaltenau's attitude. The Freiherr, even when

aided by the revealing power of his young friend's vision, had reached, as yet, nothing like a plenary illumination. He had merely come — now that another had favored him with so positive a demonstration — to a consciousness (nor too vivid a one) of Donna Violante's exquisiteness. He viewed her through a glass — not darkly, but through the teasing, provocative glass that while more than translucent is still less than transparent. He saw, too, with a borrowed eye and with a borrowed appreciation.

But Bruno credited Theodor with his own penetrative vision and his own rapt estimate. And in his heart he condemned Donna Violante as false. She was of far too stately and self-centred a character to be accused of such lightnesses as coquetry and frivolity. He passed at once to the last and lowest word in his vocabulary: she was false.

Yes, he should throw himself away — upon Lucetta; and Donna Violante, informed of the true standing of this pretended guest, should learn that he had been deprived of nothing that a mere serving-maid could not replace.

The Marchesina, actuated half by pique and half by a mere sense of fun, jumped into the breach. She ordered her double part with a steady hand. She brought out all sorts of shabby finery from some reservoir unsuspected yet seemingly inexhaustible, and she garnished her talk and manner with a variety of familiar little vulgarisms that left her new cavalier in a teasing

state of uncertainty as to whether he should laugh or should chide. She frisked, she pirouetted, she coquetted, with what seemed to Bruno to be the most appalling license — her station considered. She enjoyed the wonder and then the dark displeasure of Violante; she took the full revenge of the short, sprightly little creature upon one whose height and stately bearing placed others, less favored, at a disadvantage. And, to end with, she exacted that Bruno should be her escort at the ball. This was further than he had meant to go, but she insisted tenaciously.

"You shall be Richard, Cœur de Lion, of England," she said, "and I shall be Berengaria of Navarre. They were married at Messina, which brings them well within our lines."

And yet, for all her plebeian origin, she was a fetching little creature. She had a merry eye, a plump little hand, a cheery tip to her saucy nose — she was just the sort of sprightly wench who would determine to parade it as a queen. Then there came up before his eye the kingly coat of mail, the battle-axe, the grandiloquent blazonry of Richard's shield . . .

## VII

Meanwhile the rest of Belriguardo's company went on fitting themselves out with suitable characters — characters developed through their own researches or suggested by helpful friends. The

ransacking of history and of mythology yielded limitless spoils. One ingenious spirit suggested that Dottore Balanzoni appear as Empedocles, wearing the guise in which that philosopher was wont to roam the slopes of Ætna: the purple robe, the Delphic crown, the betraying iron sandals. Another suggested Gasparone, the bandit chief, who ruled over those same slopes from his Benedictine convent, robed as the general of the order and eating in the refectory with a sentinel at the door and a pair of pistols at every plate. Another brought up Timoleon of Corinth, who crossed the sea to free Sicily from her multiplying brood of tyrants, and who brought the statues of his predecessors to his judgment-bar and dealt them out their deserts as living men.

Suggestions for the ladies came with equal facility. Ceres must appear just as she first appeared on the Catanian plain, teaching man by her own example to sow his seed. Nor must Charybdis fail, said Capoameno. She should leave her whirlpool as should Scylla her cavern over the way, and let both tread a pacific measure to Montegrifone's music. He showed his imperfect appreciation of Mam'zelle Hedwig and his intuitive dislike of Monna Clotilde by adding half audibly that the first might impersonate the one and the second the other. And there was Laïs, too,— Laïs, snatched in her young years from her natal coast and carried by the Greeks to Athens, to be the rival of Phryne, and to be stoned to death in

the temple of Aphrodite by an infuriate band of her own sex . . . But no; why pursue the suggestion? Rather commemorate the theft of Proserpine from the banks of the Lago Pergusa, or duplicate the pomps and splendors of the wives of the Spanish viceroys.

Donna Violante heard these facetious observations, but did not smile. Rather did she look upon the course of things with a grave displeasure, and Monna Clotilde, a good second, helped to hold her firmly in countenance.

"Your friends, my poor child, have saved you from one man," she said to the indignant girl; "and soon the time will come when they" — this plural pronoun meant Monna Clotilde alone — "must save you from another. I know the world of men, I do; who better? Open your heart and you will be flouted; trust and you will be betrayed. Tell me, my poor girl, do you know in what character our young host is to appear, and with whom?"

"No," stammered Violante.

"You ought to. And you shall. I will tell you," declared the worthy woman, and she did so. "And as for me," she added, "if I must go to this foolish ball impending, I go as Atropos or not at all!"

And Monna Clotilde, assuming her tragedy frown and her tragedy stride, withdrew grandly.

## VIII

Donna Violante summoned Bruno de' Brunelli to the judgment seat. She made no delay; she depended in no degree upon favoring chance. She did not send looks of piteous injury widely afield with the remote hope that they might find the target, nor did she loiter slowly with drooping head along distant garden-paths that she might be overtaken and placated in tones of honeyed apology. Her character was of an integrity to match the simple seamlessness of some monolithic monument. She saw no equal within her range of vision and proudly disdained anything that savored of *finesse*, diplomacy, subterfuge.

Bruno came, and drummed his fingers on the edge of the sun-dial at the end of the pleasance. He seemed almost a culprit — at least she was determined to treat him as one.

"Who *is* the creature?" demanded Violante, haughtily.

"That is just the question she asked me about you," replied Bruno, the culprit, sturdily.

"She called me a creature?"

"Assuredly not. Her sense of respect, of propriety, her sense of duty toward me and my guests would have prevented such an expression."

"She asked who I was, you say?"

"Who you were; what you were; where you were from."

"You were able to tell her. Did you?"

"Not too specifically."

"In other words, she spoke slightingly of me and you found nothing to say in my defense."

"You stand in no need of defense."

"I am not so sure. I was in error when I let myself be persuaded to come within your gates, and every day of my stay has made my error less defensible."

"My gates stand wide. I am keeping open house. You are free here — anybody is, everybody is."

"'Anybody, everybody'! — that, indeed, raises my value in my own eyes! — This pert young chit — are you going to tell me who she is?"

"Not too specifically — unless you positively insist."

"I do; let me have more about that sense of duty."

"I hope that you will not."

"I do. That sense of propriety — what does it mean?"

"Very well, then: she is a member of my household."

"A member of your household? What may that signify, pray?"

"I beg you will not question me further."

"A member of your household! You are definite, indeed! What am I to understand?"

"She is a serving-maid."

"Associating with your guests?"

"Under stress of circumstances."

"And employed to affront me? Do you think I will stay here an hour longer? I came suddenly; I can go suddenly."

"You will stay," said Bruno, steadily. "And you will not impute unworthy motives."

"Stay? I shall not stay a moment! I have stayed too long already. Nothing can excuse the wretchedly mistaken impulse that led me here. I will find Monna Clotilde. We will leave at once."

"If you go," said Bruno, immovably, "I shall follow you. You shall not escape me again."

"I forbid you."

"I shall follow you. Take your choice: will you have me by your side here under a sheltering roof that justifies all, and among a goodly company of friends to keep you thoroughly in countenance, or will you have me journeying alongside over the public highway?" He paused a moment, that she might see them both travelling the same road, passing through the same villages, stabling their horses in the same innyards, and subjecting their actions to the same comment. "I shall follow you, infallibly. Will you be any great gainer by the change?"

Bruno, severe, immovable, still drummed with his sinewy brown hand upon the edge of the sundial; nothing less culprit-like than his firm gaze. Violante, pursuing her journey, could see no end in view, — save, possibly, the distasteful roof from which she had fled.

"But you will let that shameless hussy go?"

He suppressed a smile, knowing that flight was stayed. But he had not forgotten the many hours stolen from him by Theodor von Kaltenau — a theft Violante herself had permitted and encouraged. "That requires consideration," he said, as he left her.

And Violante, with a trembling lip and a few indignant tears, started up and moved off rapidly in the opposite direction.

## IX

The day set for Bruno's third and crowning function arrived. Filippo, most discreet of masters of ceremony, had revised Bruno's invitation-list so that only such *pezzi grossi* of the province should be bidden as could be depended upon to preserve a scrupulous respect for the situation as it existed and as it must exist until the climax of the ball. On the arrival of that magical moment the contents of the kaleidoscope were to shift, and new forms of a surpassing beauty and grandeur were suddenly to supersede and eclipse the old. For, thanks to von Kaltenau's activity and to the assistance of the Marchese's own men of business, the legal proceedings required to confirm Bruno's rights and to establish him in the enjoyment of them had reached a successful end: the last formal documents were expected to arrive during the course of the day. Adieu, then — with many

thanks — to Belriguardo, and a quick entry into other estates more charming, more splendid, in town and in country, — villas and palaces, orchards and vineyards, galleries, chapels, casinos — what you will.

The Freiherr lingered with Violante upon the great terrace of Belriguardo. The sky shone cloudless; the breath of bay and laurel came borne on the wings of the lightly-stirring breeze; the ruddy lateen-sails of the fishing boats cut the high line of the far horizon; the utmost revelation of prosperity and felicity hung imminent; and all things seemed good. The coming splendors of these material pomps — in whose furtherance von Kaltenau himself had been so active an agent — shed an illuminative glow upon young Bruno, and Bruno in turn shed the same glow upon this magnificent young creature at Theodor's own side. The pride of life had set up its painted and coruscating pane, and he saw her through it richly. But it were easy to eliminate the middle term, Bruno, and surely more noble to dispense with all mere external trappings. This left, then, only the ultimate beneficiary in all her brilliancy and graciousness, and the moving cause of the entire enterprise — for thus the Freiherr had come to figure himself — in all the gratified surprise of a final and complete awakening.

Violante breathed a faint sigh as she looked across the stirring treetops toward the sparkle of the distant sea. "This is the most beautiful spot

in the world, and this the most beautiful day that our visit here has brought us."

"There are more beautiful spots still awaiting us," said the Freiherr, "and more beautiful days than the present may shine upon them. Let us forget all this and look toward the future."

"Forget it?"

"Yes. Belriguardo is but a passing show, an evanescent dream. To-morrow ends it. To-morrow week it will be but a dim memory — a memory dulled by newer splendors."

"To-morrow ends it?"

"To-morrow, or the day after. By that time Montegrifone and I shall be moving on toward something better — some nobler gate, some more gracious garden. The little company here will pass through the one, I hope, to find still greater pleasure in the other. There will be a dozen servitors for every one seen here; for every rose, a hundred; for every glory, a thousand" —

Bruno and Lucetta crossed the other end of the terrace, and both glanced toward Violante. Lucetta seemed more arch and sprightly than ever, the tip of her nose more saucy, the smile on her lip more provocative. Bruno's face wore at once a smile and a watchful frown, and his manner combined gallantry with injured dignity in such measure as to mark the jealous lover consciously playing a part.

"And for every deceit a million!" said Violante, vehemently.

"Deceit?"

"You leave to-morrow, you say? Then why have I been urged to remain? Is it one deceit the more? Or is it that I may be insulted, up to the last moment, by the spectacle of a vulgar intrigue?"

"A vulgar intrigue?"

"Do you not know that that creature" — Lucetta and Bruno were now moving off, with an elaborate yet wary portrayal of gay unconsciousness — "is a mere serving-maid in this house?"

"No, no; you are wrong, believe me."

"Wrong? Did not Montegrifone himself tell me so?"

The Freiherr groaned. "He told you so? Impossible! How could such an odious thing ever have come about?"

"I — I" —

"You asked him?"

"I urged; I insisted. I never trifle; I never temporize. I always take the simplest, straightest way."

"It has misled you. She is not a serving-maid here."

"One deceit the more! She is a guest, then, on an equality with the others?"

Von Kaltenau hesitated. "No," he felt constrained to answer.

"Still another deceit! A web of deceit, and I am entangled in its meshes. Pretense, subterfuge, tricky uncertainties of every kind! Even you, whom I was beginning to like and to trust, seem

in some dark conspiracy against me. I will go; I will not remain another hour. I care nothing for this deceptive place and its dubious gayeties. I will go this moment, and I will not be followed!"

She rose and glided indignantly across the terrace, an incensed young goddess too single-minded for concealment, too single-souled for compromise. Her bosom rose and fell, her sweet lips quivered, and tears compounded of anger and uncertainty and self-pity started in her dark eyes.

Theodor followed after her and caught her hand. "You are not to go," he said.

She paused. Though there was a tremor in his hand, his hold was firm; while light and gentle enough, it showed no sign of relaxing. There was a tremor, too, in his voice, but its tones were very grave and quiet. Violante checked her course; he had impressed her. She would have broken away from the clamorous impetuosity of Bruno, but the repression and self-mastery of this mature man established, in a way, his mastery over her as well.

"You are not to go," he repeated. "You have deceived yourself, or you have been deceived; in any event you are in error. You need the guidance of older heads, and you must accept it. You must trust for a little; you must trust me. Whatever you may wish to know, you will learn to-night or to-morrow. Meanwhile, you must stay. Do you think that you can be allowed to leave us? If you withdraw Belriguardo stands without fur-

ther reason for existence, and the future will be but a blank echoing hollowly, fruitlessly with the ghostly sounds of things that might have been. You are to stay, and to fill the part that of right is yours to fill, the part that nature herself designed you for: to be the queen of every revel, the centre of every festivity, the ruler of every heart. You promise?"

Donna Violante looked at him with eyes as grave and steady as his own. "I promise," she said.

He stooped to kiss the hand upon which he had never relaxed his hold. There was still more that might be said and done, but he himself was to blame for the imbroglio that had brought about this opportunity, and must not push the occasion too far. He set his kiss there and went away.

Bruno, returning, saw this act of homage, but overlooked, of course, the scruple that had put a bar to further colloquy. His eyes glowed at once with passionate love and anger. He caught at the hand that Theodor had just relinquished, and darted a sternly indignant glance after his retreating friend.

"You are for me!" he said hotly, to the girl, in a voice of repressed rage and longing. "You are for me, despite the wiles of treacherous friends. And I am for you, all that I am and have," — here his hand swept over Belriguardo's fair domain, — "and hope to have. Take me, and let there be an end."

Violante considered him steadily for a moment. His tone and his manner were alike violent; but the surface excitement of the ocean is little when compared with the vast nether movement that sways the flood as an immense unit, yet leaves the surface itself scarce ruffled. And his way was too assured — rather the assurance of youthful confidence, it seemed, than the assurance that comes from a consciousness of self-poise and self-control. He seemed very young. And that anomalous little Lucetta was hardly out of sight round the corner.

"Speak to me," he said; "I love you. Fulfil your destiny — be mine!"

Donna Violante had recovered her composure, and now looked about slowly, in more directions than one — in that, among others, which Theodor von Kaltenau had taken upon retiring. Bruno's eager eyes were fastened on her face. She withdrew her hand from his and took a step or two away.

"That requires consideration," she said, in unconscious repetition of Bruno's own words.

## X

The middle of the afternoon found the entire company disposed in scattered groups over the wide expanse of Belriguardo's gray-flagged terrace. The preparations for the evening's fête were complete. Dottore Balanzoni had finally decided upon Empedocles. Madama Sophonisba

had contrived, from the contents of her many coffers, a costume magnificently barbaric enough for any Carthaginian princess. Her young men had devised simple dresses based on the Greek tunic, and helped out by wreaths and sandals. A general truce prevailed. Donna Violante ignored Lucetta, and kept Bruno at arm's length. Von Kaltenau and Capoameno, busy with some practical details of one kind or another, overlooked, for the moment, any tension that might exist.

All at once the rumble of wheels and the clatter of hoofs were heard in the distance. The sound grew to a crescendo and suddenly ceased at Belriguardo's gate.

The one passenger in the coach alighted and was admitted. He advanced along the terrace — a dark man of thirty, of no more than medium height, with broad, square shoulders and a dense black moustache, with a like tuft just below his lip. It was Prince Giacinto Malevento.

Malevento made a rapid survey that took in everybody, yet ignored all save Bruno and Violante, — to the latter of whom he gave a marked but distant bow, — and walked straight toward Filippo, smiling and extending his hand with the overdone cordiality of a mere acquaintance who means to ask for hospitality.

"My dear Marchese!" he exclaimed, in a high, clear voice. Everybody heard him.

"You know this man?" whispered the Freiherr in Filippo's ear.

"I know him slightly; I know him as I know hundreds of others," whispered Capoameno in return.

Malevento glanced about with an air of lordly self-possession. "Welcome me to Belriguardo," he went on, addressing the Marchese. "Rumors of your fête have reached the outer world, my dear Capoameno, — very curious and puzzling rumors, to tell the truth; and the slightest encouragement would induce me to participate!"

Violante stared in astonishment. Bruno, at whom the Prince was now beginning to look with a singular, questioning expression, contracted his brows in an angry, jealous frown and made a quick stride forward.

Filippo still refrained from taking Malevento's hand and tried to becloud the look of recognition that he had allowed to dawn upon his face. The overwhelming mortification awaiting young Bruno was greater than he had heart to help bring about.

"Surely you remember me," said the Prince. "I am Giacinto Malevento. We have met at Naples, at Castellammare, at" —

"Giacinto Malevento?"

"Yes; and you, as surely, are Filippo Capoameno, master of Belriguardo" —

"Master of Belriguardo!" gasped Bruno.

— "and I have to acknowledge your kindness in giving asylum to a lady whom I have sought everywhere for a week or more." Malevento glanced toward Violante.

"But this is certainly an error," said Capoameno, "I" —

"Assuredly so," said Bruno, haughtily. "An unpardonable one!"

— "I very much regret," pursued Filippo, "that a misunderstanding should have led you to — to" —

Malevento stared at the Marchese with an air at once puzzled and offended. The Marchesina pushed forward and caught Filippo by the arm.

"Filippo!" she cried, "what do you mean? My dear brother" —

"His sister!" gasped Violante.

— "my dear brother, how much longer shall you keep up this mad perversity? Of course" — and she turned toward the perplexed company — "you are the Marchese Filippo Capoameno, and equally, of course, the master, the one and only master, of Belriguardo!" Lucetta paused panting and shot such a glance at Bruno as gave ample revenge for the embarrassments and humiliations of the past fortnight.

"Yes," he said, smiling feebly, and at last taking hold of Malevento's waiting hand; "yes, I am Filippo Capoameno. Welcome to Belriguardo."

## XI

Bruno's guests looked at him and at one another in blank amaze. They felt the ground shifting beneath their feet. The common tie that bound

them all together was relaxed. The Palace of Pleasure crumbled in an instant.

Donna Violante advanced toward Bruno with an air of boundless scorn. Mouna Clotilde followed close after her and looked over her shoulder like a bird of ill-omen — a bird about to utter a croaking note long meditated.

"This, then, is your love!" said Violante to Bruno. "You have tricked me; you have insulted me. You have humiliated me; you have made me ridiculous. You have set fraud beneath my feet and woven the web of deception round my head. I have never once placed foot here upon honest ground, never once been allowed to see things as they really were. You offer me everything, when what you have to offer is nothing. You offer me yourself, after having insolently offered yourself to another under my very eyes. We part here and now. I have no respect for you; you should have no respect for yourself. This is the end."

Bruno looked at her as from a cloud, a cloud full of eyes — the eyes of those exacting and inquiring persons who had clamored for life to come close to them with all its passions and surprises. "This house is mine," was all he could say.

"This house is mine," said Filippo, gently. "No one could be sorrier than I, and no one more to blame."

"The house is nothing," exclaimed Violante. "A hundred houses would be nothing. A hut would have been enough, if more, much more, had

not been promised — and promised all unasked. But the deceit I never can forgive, nor the mortification." She turned toward Filippo. "Let me beg a thousand pardons for such inconsiderate treatment of so gallant a gentleman, so kindly a host" —

Malevento began to get a stronger grip on the situation — a grip somewhat weakened by Filippo's generous denial. He smiled satirically to see Bruno de' Brunelli at so cruel a disadvantage — a disadvantage that could not but advance his own plans.

He stepped over toward Violante. She shut him out from her as summarily as she had already shut out his rival.

"No," she said, and said no more. Her head drooped slightly to one side, and the young romancer who stood close by, and whom the Freiherr remembered as having apostrophized the multitudinous waves of the ocean of life, held unconsciously to his earlier practice, and drew away: not yet was he ready to surrender his toes to the wash of the sea. So Donna Violante let her hand be gathered up in the advancing hand of Monna Clotilde and let her head fall toward Clotilde's shoulder.

"No," repeated Clotilde, cutting off the two young men from all hope and mercy, but saving the full venom of her eyes for Malevento. "Look your last upon her, both of you," she cried in a tone of strident triumph, "for you shall never see her more!"

She led Violante away. The girl went passively, with her eyes on the ground and a deadly mortification gnawing at her heart.

## XII

The exit of Violante produced a deep and diversified impression. The little knot of pilgrims looked at one another in great embarrassment and uncertainty. "Are we welcome guests?" they seemed to be asking, "or are we unwelcome intruders? And if guests in good standing, who is our host? And may we remain here yet a little longer, or must we leave at once this palace of delights?" Dottore Balanzoni relapsed into the dense dejection from which the pleasures of the past fortnight had almost rescued him. Mam'zelle Hedwig drooped before the blighting idea that these few precious days of gallantry and courtesy were already of the past. Madama Sophonisba's countenance was darkly overclouded at the thought that one of the choicest episodes in her life had come to a sudden and equivocal close.

But the artists in her train were in high feather. The occasion offered them more than observation — it offered participation. They were in the drama and almost of it. The painter, wondering upon whom the gathering rage of Bruno was about to fall, felt that he was getting into things at last. The fictionist, viewing the deep distress and contrition of von Kaltenau, inwardly determined that

he would not shirk active participation a second time — let the flood come, if it would. They both looked after Violante, and then they both brought their eyes back to Bruno.

Bruno stood there in arrest — like a young bull who escapes from his long dark confinement to face his antagonists in the arena. The flood of light poured in upon him had dazed him, and he raised and lowered his head as if to distinguish and to attack some one particular opponent. He might have chanced upon Filippo, whose fantastic folly had brought them all into this dire imbroglio, or upon Malevento, whose abrupt disclosures had shattered in a moment the entire fabric of his dream. But the first face that issued clear before him from the intolerable glaring mist that enwrapped all was the distressed and solicitous face of Theodor von Kaltenau.

"I am indebted to you for this," said Bruno, in a voice half inarticulate from mortification and rage. "I trusted you as a friend, and my trust has brought me — here. You misled me; you deceived me. You have placed me in a fool's paradise where all might mock at me; you have stolen from me my self-respect and you would have taken advantage of my utter trust in you to steal something dearer far than all" —

"No, no!" cried the Freiherr, in earnest protest.

"You have allowed me to insult our common host" —

"Pray let that pass," cried Filippo, quickly. "The fault is mine."

— "and to — to" — Bruno looked toward Lucetta with a flush, and found no words to voice his penitence.

"Let that pass, too," cried Lucetta, brightly. "I deserved the punishment."

"My dream is over," pursued Bruno. "I shall go back to my northern home, chastised for my hopes and my presumption" —

"No, no!" exclaimed the Freiherr again. "If there is one loss, there will be a dozen gains. Let Belriguardo go — 't is but a makeshift, a stop-gap; 't is but the skiff you have taken to board a great steamer for a long and prosperous voyage — left when no longer needed, and" —

"Not a word more!" said Bruno. "I will not listen to you. In your selfishness you have disgraced and degraded me before the one being that I" —

He paused to throw a look of utter detestation upon Giacinto Malevento and then reeled away, thrusting back a stiffened arm that forbade all companionship and all pursuit.

## XIII

Violante had upbraided Bruno, Bruno had struck at Theodor, and now Theodor, intent upon passing along the buffet, looked about for some deserving cheek. He could not tax Malevento, who appar-

ently had not had the fullest idea of the effect that his recognition of Filippo was to produce, and who had controlled a bitter tongue that might have said many taunting things. Filippo himself was to blame, — Filippo, the ultimate fountain-head of all these woes. But poor Filippo, already in the depths of contrition, was too pitiful an object to be made to serve as general scapegoat. "Besides," thought the Freiherr, "I myself am to blame in part. My own determination to enjoy, my own eagerness to enjoy at once, my own unwillingness to endure the least delay in that poor boy's assumption of his office of interpreter — these, in the end, have to answer for all."

And the end was come. Bruno abashed, abased, broken in spirit, ruined, perhaps, in timbre; useless as a riven lute, as an unstrung harp. Violante incensed, cruelly mortified, in a position now odiously irregular, and upon the point of a hurried, goalless flight. His own plans wrecked, his own hopes dashed, his future days already under the gray shadow of the demon who rules the hapless middle years. The palace of Klingsor had crumbled; the enchanted gardens had withered in an instant.

The little knot of pilgrims looked about them dubiously, reproachfully, asking upon whom they might cast the blame for this last and greatest disappointment in lives too full of disappointment already. Another mirage had faded; the *fata Morgana* had deceived them once again. The

Palace of Pleasure had dissipated into thin air; the Last Refuge was as far away as ever. The dumb poet now seemed double-locked in silence; the Dutch jurist leaned upon the balustrade in a very abandonment to despair.

Von Kaltenau, in fullest need of some friendly prop, crossed over to Balanzoni and placed a hand upon his shoulder.

"That city — the city you told me of in Rome," he said: "I may wish to journey thither with you."

## PART VI. — MANŒUVRINGS

### I

BELRIGUARDO'S historical pageant was carried through with such maimed rites as could not but follow on a sudden change of host and the defection of the chief guests. There was no Acis, no Galatea. Polyphemus — a new one — had come rushing down upon them from his stronghold and wrecked their loves. Violante, accompanied by Monna Clotilde, had fled away forthwith, disdaining to hear a word of justification from Bruno and refusing to take the least avail of the friendly offices of Theodor von Kaltenau. She could forgive Bruno for Belriguardo, but not for Lucetta. In the one case he may have been a victim; but in the other case he was surely an offender. One house, more or less, made little difference; but one woman, more or less, made all the difference in the world. She could overlook, even pity, the lack of perception that had led the young man so easily into the quagmire of error, but she could not pardon the double dealings that had marked his relations with the Marchesina.

As for Bruno himself, his one idea was to hide his humbled head from mortal view. He could

not face Capoameno, notwithstanding the kindly jocularity with which the Marchese tried to carry things off; he could not pluck up the spirit to meet the cynical, satirical smile of Giacinto Malevento; he could not trust himself to any further parley with von Kaltenau, whom he looked upon as a traitor doubly damned — a trusted friend who had led him into a fraudulent palace of enchantment and then had employed its dazzling fascinations to rob him of his love. He, too, left within the hour, and went none knew whither.

Filippo, then, appeared as host, in proper person, and his aunt, who had played the part of housekeeper, resumed her native quality and received his guests. They came in numbers, their curiosity piqued by the promise of a particularly unique entertainment. Young Cervel-Balzano, who had figured in the cavalcade as a postillion, presented himself with three or four others of his kind, and their quizzical humor contributed still further to the discomfiture of the remaining pilgrims. The situation had its restraints, its difficulties, and though the Marchese had urged his guests to let the sudden change in host make no difference in their plans, most of them declined his invitation to abide longer and left on the following day. They all felt the flaw in their beautiful ideal, the wrench to their collective hopes and aspirations; the Last Refuge surely lay elsewhere.

To some of them, as to Dottore Balanzoni, the palace of pleasure was a ruin — one more ruin in

a land of ruins. Youth, love, hope, joy — all these had receded like a half-revealed mirage. Nothing was left but recollection; nothing was to do but to brood over what might have been. In this mood the travellers dispersed over the island, in search of — they scarce knew what. Their thoughts turned to other ruins: to Segesta, desolate on its high hilltop; to the sandy promontory of Selinunto, within the mass of whose dishevelled colonnades the Arabs made a last stand against the conquering Normans; to Girgenti, girdled with temples on its upper and lower rims alike; to Syracuse, where the vast limestone plateau that overlooks Ortygia is strewn with fragmental tokens of glories past; to Taormina, which looks out from the midst of ruins — Greek, Roman, Saracenic, Norman-Gothic — across toward the blue Calabrian mountains dim in the east. "A world in itself, all this!" exclaimed Mam'zelle Hedwig to von Kaltenau, vivaciously. And she gave him an appealing glance, as if to ask whether a poor lone woman who knew but little of the native tongue and still less of the native ways was to venture into all these distant tracts alone.

## II

Thus it happened that while Montegrifone — secure at last in his title — was dividing a hot attention between an installation in his new estates and an interception of Malevento's advances on

Donna Violante, to von Kaltenau fell the milder employment of escorting Mam'zelle Hedwig through a succession of the Sicilian towns. Yes, Mam'zelle had her uses; she held despair at bay and rescued her vacillating friend from the sombre offices of the despondent Balanzoni.

Theodor von Kaltenau had an honest liking for Mam'zelle and her peculiarities. If Donna Violante reminded him of the dusky and ambiguous and exotic splendors of a Cappella Palatina, then Mam'zelle Hedwig brought into view the grotesque yet familiar homeliness of a late-Gothic chapel in a back street of some small German provincial town. The one was strange and magnificent and fascinating; the other was of the racial blood, and made no acute address because it made a constant one. Von Kaltenau had strained his eyes over Donna Violante just as one may strain his eyes in the heavy dusk that enwraps the antique columns and pointed arches that bear up King Roger's wondrous dome. Full illumination had never quite come, not even when the worshipful hand of another had lit up the tapers in the towering marble candelabra and had called upon the sheeted spread of gold-mosaic to issue glitteringly from the enshrouding gloom. The Teutonic imaginings of the northern architect, on the other hand, gave him no trouble whatever; he could even shut his eyes and yet see the naïve heraldic bearings that sprawled over the painted panes, the graceless stub-tail traceries, the gro-

tesque fancies carved in maladroit fashion upon the receding arches of the weather-beaten porch. Mam'zelle, in short, was homely, but easily intelligible on the ground of mere racial affinity.

They met, furthermore, upon a common ground still broader: the singular northern longing for the South. Two pines had uprooted themselves from the cold northland heights to take their poise upon the "brennende Felsenwand" of which the poet sings, and if their tips tended a little now and then each toward the other no one need wonder. Perhaps Mam'zelle leaned a little the more of the two; she was not only a Teuton, but an admiring and a grateful Teuton. To her the Freiherr was a gracious being, of chivalry all compact; she could not withhold her highest esteem from a man who had done so much — and done it so quietly, withal — to rehabilitate her in her own eyes. Mam'zelle had always been the lame duck of her own domestic brood; her years at home were a moving chronicle of snubs and repressions suffered from overbearing relatives. The Freiherr's earliest attentions had filled her with wondering surprise, then with an overflowing gratitude; and she was now rapidly reaching the point where she could feel herself fully grounded upon the rock of self-esteem at last. His courtesies — almost the first she had ever encountered — confirmed her wavering impression of her own worth, and were already prompting her to take the initiative on her own account. Mam'zelle — well might Theodor

von Kaltenau have anticipated her evolution! — began to become a little arch, a little coquettish, a little exacting, a little imperious . . .

An unfortunate incident that occurred at Segesta strengthened Mam'zelle's position, and almost confirmed her dominance. It was here that the Freiherr saved her life. This was her own contention; his was that he had merely saved her purse. But Mam'zelle's impassioned outpouring of thanks caused her opinion to prevail.

He had left her seated in the theatre, while he himself descended to the temple in search of some of her small belongings that she had heedlessly left behind. He returned to find her threatened, with a sort of feeble ferocity, by a poor ragged fellow who was physically and morally the victim of Sicily's deplorable social and economical conditions. Mam'zelle defended her pocket valiantly; no attack on the national treasury could have evoked a more heroic spirit of resistance. She felt the corner-stone of her exchequer assailed, and saw the entire fabric of her Sicilian journey crashing down into ruin. She had the vision of a precipitate return to the distasteful parental roof, and of the one expansive opportunity of a lifetime brought to nothing. All this nerved her against the fierce sallow face and the clutching fingers of the poor creature whom his own crying needs and the loneliness of the spot had impelled to a readjustment (so far as he himself was concerned) of the general social scheme. But Mam'zelle had no

thought of surrender or of compromise. To her a penny was a pound, and a pound was a fortune. She tugged and screamed, and bravely held her own. She gripped her shabby little purse, and in her stress of action was but dimly conscious of the possible stiletto that, under circumstances less strenuous, would have shone before her with such steely clearness as to paralyze action altogether.

The Freiherr, returning, saw her straits, and came running to her rescue. He caught at a knife that was just coming forth clumsily from some pocket or other of ragged Robin's shredded apparel, and firmly sent the fellow about his business. His own lack of temper and of violence was quite impressive to his charge, who coughed and choked a little to free her throat from the sense of her assailant's fingers, and looked at her bruised wrists and forearms in comfortable confirmation of a great danger escaped, and gave a second's admiring consideration to Theodor's mastery over circumstances and over himself, and then panted a little and modestly swayed his way and closed her brown button-like eyes and let her head fall on his shoulder.

"You have saved my life; you have saved my life!" murmured Mam'zelle, and would take no denial.

## III

From that moment Mam'zelle Hedwig was a person of vastly greater importance in her own

eyes. A *preux chevalier* had found her life worth saving; far be it from her, then, to underestimate that life's value. More, when a man saves the life of a woman whose company he has deliberately chosen almost anything may follow — her future is in his keeping. It was now that Mam'zelle began to ply her arch imperiousness, and to tax the Freiherr with imaginary slights and neglects, and to ask him, in moments when his attention seemed not fully alert to her addresses, where his thoughts were wandering, and to create imaginary beings upon whom the responsibility for his indifference might be cast. For Mam'zelle was another of those who had been denied the blessing of taking up the component parts of life in regular order; and there were moments when her courses seemed to be bringing them both within the lines of an affair than which none could be more awkward, more maladroit: such an affair, in short, as threatened to carry back two mature persons, by a sort of amatory undertow, to flounder gracelessly enough, before countless eyes only too avid of entertainment, among the shimmering shallows of young love's shore.

"Intolerable!" thought the Freiherr, with a shudder.

He continued to be the victim of the intermittent brown study, — an obsession for which his companion now openly ventured to hint a reason more specific than any yet entertained, or at least mentioned. They were now at the far west of the

island, and their ascent from Trapani to Eryx on donkey-back, with the constant shiftings of position incident to such a mode of locomotion, gave her good opportunity for her abundant intimations and insinuations.

Slowly they swung and jolted up to the ancient shrine of many gods and many nations, and the Freiherr would willingly have given a faithful meed of attention to the abounding memories of other days: to Hercules and Æneas, rival founders; to Baal and to Astarte, to Jupiter and Venus Erycina; to Hamilcar and to the destruction of Carthage's fleet in the waters below them — a victory that closed the first Punic War; and to the widening panorama of mountainous island and rocky headland and ever-extending coast-line and ever-lifting horizon that grew with their ascent. But Mam'zelle had other thoughts, and unscrupulously let drop the curtain of mere personal interest between him and a view so illuminated by beauty and so charged with history.

"Ah, the present moment!" began Mam'zelle, in a fine generalization that was soon discovered to be less comprehensive than it sounded. "It is the only thing that counts — the only thing we are sure of. The past is past. Its hopes, its pleasures, its disappointments — let us forget them, let us not try to bring them back. The mirage fades; the last cloud-shred is dissipated" — and more in the same general tenor.

"True," said the Freiherr, quite accustomed,

by this time, to Mam'zelle's little flights of lyricism.

"You say, 'true,'" observed Mam'zelle, tugging at her donkey's bridle; "but what is the use of perceiving a truth if one does not act upon it?"

"How do you mean?"

"You are dwelling on the past. You regret it. You would like to relive it."

"By no means. I can think of scarcely a day in my life that I should care to relive. I have had few experiences that I should not be quite willing to forget." The Freiherr, not caring to exert himself to any great degree, fell into this strain almost automatically. He had found that it always interested women — particularly single women past their first youth.

Mam'zelle looked at him, over the wagging ears of her unkempt little beast, as if about to request, point-blank, his complete autobiography.

"Even that of Belriguardo?"

"Belriguardo? Is that already of the past, and only of the past? Is the door locked? Is the book shut? Is the scroll rolled up and forever laid away?" Thus he repaid Mam'zelle in her own poetic coin.

"Is it of the present?" she asked peremptorily.

"So much might be declared. Who shall say when a thing is over?"

Mam'zelle's lips tightened. "I knew it," she said.

"Knew what?"

"What you are thinking of. What you are always thinking of. What has not been out of your thoughts for an hour since all of us bade Belriguardo good-by."

"What is it?" demanded von Kaltenau, with all directness. "Come, come; no hesitation. Tell me."

## IV

"Why," began Mam'zelle, stammeringly, now that she found herself actually in the breach, "you — you are thinking of that ungrateful boy, and are taxing yourself with offenses not justly yours."

"Oh, really," began von Kaltenau. He had indeed been thinking over his relations with Bruno, but the more he thought of them the less was he inclined to give himself the blame. He had in truth put the boy at a poignant disadvantage, but only a temporary one; while, on the other hand, he had done substantial service toward establishing the new duke in the niche wherein he promised to pass a long life of dignity and affluence. Bruno himself would think the matter over and would presently come to a like conclusion. As he visited some newer villa or familiarized himself with some richer estate or conferred with his stewards and attorneys in that lofty old palace at the capital, he would come to a juster idea of his friend's services and be more willing to put aside all memory of that last mortifying hour at Belriguardo.

"I shall never forget," said Mam'zelle, "how ungraciously he flung away from you; how he refused to hear one word of regret or of explanation" —

"I am afraid that I myself gave him a bad example of impulsiveness," said von Kaltenau. "I was too eager for enjoyment; less for his enjoyment than mine, and indeed no more for mine than for yours."

Mam'zelle stroked her donkey's ears very tenderly and reined him a little nearer to his mate. "For mine?"

"Yes; I saw you had ideals, and I wished them to be satisfied. No, — I was not thinking particularly of Montegrifone." The Freiherr had become rather proud of the impulsive action that had involved Belriguardo in such dire embarrassments; for so marked an impulsiveness argued, after all, a certain degree of youth.

"Then," proceeded Mam'zelle, "you must be thinking of the Marchese and of all the discomforts you made him undergo just for my pleasure. The blame for that is no less mine than yours. I will share it with you," she said sociably.

"Let him bear it all. He was old enough to know better. Don't give him a thought — I'm not doing so."

"Then," said Mam'zelle, "you are thinking of — of that poor dear old gentleman from Leyden. Your conscience reproaches you for having promised to travel on with him and then having chosen to travel on with — me!"

"Oh, he will rub along very well," declared the Freiherr. "I shall meet him again, somewhere, before long. Meanwhile, he does n't weigh on my mind, I assure you."

He smiled to himself at Mam'zelle's assumption of his having "chosen" to travel with her. There had been no choice, unless a choice of her own. He had passively accepted an arrangement such as the fate that presides over the fellowships of voyagers seemed of itself to have decreed.

"Then," persisted Mam'zelle Hedwig, now making an appreciable advance into the core of her theme, "you are reproaching yourself for the annoyances you caused that dear little Marchesina. So youthful, so pretty, so charming, so worthy the attentions of a spirited and gallant young fellow — and yet kept under a cloud the whole time! What could be more humiliating, more exasperating?"

"Nothing," acknowledged the Freiherr, picking his way carefully up the stony slope.

"But it is all over now," said Mam'zelle, emphasizing her assumption that Belriguardo and its associations were completely of the dead and buried past; "it is all over now. No wonder you are pensive; no wonder you sigh!"

The Freiherr smiled. This presentation of the possible loves of Bruno and Lucetta pleased him — though a treatment still more lightly decorative would have harmonized more completely with the humor that always prevailed in him when he came to consider the heart interests of two very young

people. At such a juncture neither temperament nor habit of mind greatly helped him. Even the much more tangible affair of Bruno and Violante he could not always solidify into serious significance. They were children, just as he and Mam'zelle Hedwig were aging adults. The affair of two children was light; the affair of two middle-aged persons was absurd. Sometimes only an affair between a young girl and a man no longer in his first youth seemed the one to conserve all the necessary elements and yet to eliminate the elements of juvenile slightness and of absurdity.

"Yes, it is all over," reiterated Mam'zelle, with solemnity; "it is all a thing of the past. And that haughty, heartless girl, who threw him over when she felt herself disappointed in her hopes of earthly grandeur — she is a thing of the past, too?" asked Mam'zelle, dexterously altering her inflection and inserting an interrogation-point in her eyes as well as in her text. "Will he ever forget her cruel disdain? Will she ever forgive his innocent deception? Yet they would have done so well together; they were almost made for each other. It seemed so to me; it must have seemed so to you. May we hear of their union yet!"

Mam'zelle was apparently determined to wipe all the young people clean off the board, and to leave the field clear for the manœuvres of an earlier generation. "It must have seemed so to you," she repeated. "Did n't it?" she added. "Does n't it?" she added, further.

"Look behind," said von Kaltenau, twisting himself sidewise upon the furry back of his donkey. "Let us drop the future for a moment." He waved his hand seaward. "Let us cast an eye over the present, — and the past. Look!"

## V

Mam'zelle's boy plied his stick and grasped his beast by the tail and brought the widening prospect over plain and sea and rocky coast within her range. The citadel of Eryx still lay far above them, the crown of many wooded and precipitous slopes; but the horizon had lifted itself grandly, and the shores, from Punic Marsala on the one hand to the bold headland of San Vito on the other, spread map-like below them. Far out at sea the Ægadian Isles reared their mountainous peaks, still claiming the sky rather than the sea for their background, and challenging — tall Maritimo, at least — the rugged rock above their heads, where Phœnicians and Romans alike had founded their strongholds and sanctuaries. Brigs and feluccas laden with grain and sulphur and the wines of Marsala and the alabaster of Trapani drew their gray or ruddy sails across the blue field of the water, and the rich coast plains stood spring-decked in the varying greens of orange and olive and mastic-trees.

Mam'zelle looked. "Did n't it? Does n't it?" she repeated.

The Freiherr twitched his bridle. Mam'zelle's abounding enthusiasm was in temporary subordination; he wished that she would soon become her normal self.

"They were made for each other, of course," she reiterated. "It cannot be that you would have them separated."

The Freiherr gave his beast a second intimation to go on.

"You do not speak. Does that mean that you have not made up your mind?"

Donna Violante, under Mam'zelle's stippling touch, was recovering a vividness that had begun to fade. Nothing kept her completely before him save her own bodily presence or the pointed comments of friends. Bruno could accomplish this in one way. Mam'zelle seemed able to accomplish it in another. Donna Violante, in all her youth and grace and beauty and spirit, was returning from the limbo into which the Freiherr's dulled brain had allowed her to lapse; and the more clearly she reappeared the more definitely did Mam'zelle Hedwig seem but a pleasant, homely grotesque — and nothing more.

"It is hardly my mind that will decide these matters," he replied.

"Then let them decide for themselves."

"Where there are three hearts, one must be broken, I suppose!"

"Then make a firm resolve. Sacrifice yourself!"

"If the third heart were only mine! But the third heart is the Marchesina's — as you yourself have just pointed out." The Freiherr smiled half whimsically, half provocatively, as a man who does not fully know his own mind. "Do you ask me to sacrifice hers?"

"That girl is still in your thoughts, I see."

"Lucetta? Surely."

"I mean the other. And that boy should be there too. You have a duty toward him — a duty of forbearance, at least. You must not let him give you the right to accuse you of — of treachery."

"Quite true," said the Freiherr, gravely. "I am thinking of that."

"Their union is predestined. There are no serious bars between them. There is no line of race to be overstepped, nor of age, nor of rank, nor of language, nor of creed."

"Those are all things to be considered."

"Then consider them," said Mam'zelle, with emphatic archness.

Von Kaltenau smiled as he reviewed the wavering course of Mam'zelle's diplomacy, the donkey boys thumped and shouted, the horizon steadily rose; and presently, Mam'zelle, standing on the rugged rock of Eryx's ivy-grown castle, laid aside her personal preoccupations, like a good traveller, and made the noble prospect far and wide her own.

## VI

Our two friends soon found that little time was needed for the scanty ruins within the dwindling town, and they presently remounted their beasts to regain Trapani by sunset. As they dismounted again, just within Trapani's town gate, a man passed by with the observing glance of the stranger and the assured mien of the grand seigneur. Von Kaltenau looked after him and recognized Giacinto Malevento.

They met that evening at dinner; they were lodged in the same hotel, and they ate, as chance would have it, side by side at the same table. Both were surprised at this rencontre in faraway Trapani, and both sparred politely, each to learn why the other was here. Donna Violante, upon leaving Belriguardo, had laid an equal ban on Montegrifone and Malevento alike: neither of them was to presume to make the slightest attempt toward following her. Where was Violante now? Where was Bruno? Why was Malevento here?

"You have been in Trapani some time?" asked the Freiherr, balancing his spoon.

"A day or so."

"You have friends here, perhaps?"

"Quite the contrary!" returned Malevento, shrugging his shoulders.

"Enemies, then?"

"That might be said."

"Enemies? And are you to fight them or to fly them?"

"Both."

"You are not to fly too soon, I trust. I shall hope to have the pleasure of finding you still here to-morrow."

"Until to-morrow noon — no longer. Time has its value." Malevento spoke as one who, if he had not accomplished his purpose, had at least laid his hands upon the means of doing so. "And you?"

"I have no fixed plans, no set hours. I am a mere idler."

"You are here alone?"

"No," smiled the Freiherr.

"Still the faithful friend, I see."

"I hope so," returned the Freiherr, smiling broadly. "I ask to be no more."

"Friendship makes its exactions, inflicts its trials."

"Truly you are right."

"And has its failures as well as its successes."

"So much so that certain forms of friendship might be said to be foredoomed to failure."

"Yes; friendships where there is a great disparity of years: there must be no greater trial than the headlong selfishness of mere boyhood."

"Or the clinging hold of coming middle age."

Malevento could get no particular meaning out of this observation. It seemed, however, to remove Bruno from the field. "You find little enough of interest here, I suppose?"

"Little enough. And you?"

"I look for nothing more than has been yielded already."

"Something of value, I dare say?"

"Something of great value. You will be leaving to-morrow too?"

"Possibly."

"And you go toward" —

"It may be Selinunto. Or Girgenti."

"Make it Girgenti, by all means. The hotel there is too good to lose — the only good one in the Island, outside of Palermo. It is a family villa. I know the proprietor — a charming fellow: a young man who was a lieutenant of cavalry, and who keeps his own racing stable . . . Let me note it down for you. Make it Girgenti, by all means!"

Malevento thrust his hand into his pocket, with the idea of dedicating a detached page from his note-book to this service. Along with the note-book came two or three letters that fell on the table amidst the spoons and glasses. One of them, in particular, caught the Freiherr's eye. Its square envelope, of a creamy white, was addressed (aside from the supplementary hands of forwarding clerks) in the large, sprawling, angular penmanship that awakens admiration in some parts of the world and derisive wonder in others. But the mere penmanship was nothing; it was the address itself that took his attention. This address, which showed a fine relish for the elaboration of an aristocratic title, was that of the Duke of Montegri-

fone; and the postmark, which the Freiherr caught as well, in the brief moment that intervened before Malevento could snatch the letters up, shuffle them together, and return them hastily to his pocket, was that of Trapani, where, doubtless, the letter had just been claimed and delivered.

"There!" said Malevento, thrusting his memorandum upon von Kaltenau. "Enrico is a thoroughly good fellow; he will do everything to make you comfortable. And when you go to Syracuse," he went on rapidly, "there is the new hotel close to the harbor. And at Taormina — of course you will not omit Taormina — pass over the whole brood of minor inns and go to the monastery that my friend Count Albergatore has just fitted up. The most glorious situation in Europe, on a cliff a hundred and fifty metres above the sea, full in the face of the Calabrian mountains, and in the very front of Ætna — I am sure you like mountains, you strange Northerner. You sleep in the cells, and every bedroom has its antechamber; and there are bath-tubs, I am told, in case you care to" —

Malevento was struggling hardily to recover his self-composure and to down the tell-tale flush he felt upon his cheek.

"Thank you," said von Kaltenau, accepting the memorandum. "You have done me a great service."

It came to this, then: Bruno was here, and Malevento was intercepting his letters. Which of the two had come first, and why had the other

followed? And why was Malevento so intent upon packing his "strange Northerner" to the other extreme of the island?

"Yes, Bruno is here," said the Freiherr, coming back to the one seeming certainty. He made immediate inquiries within his own hotel and sent messengers to the others. Nothing was learned. "To-morrow morning, at the bankers' and at the post-office," he said.

## VII

The bankers told him nothing, but the post-office had a letter for him — a letter whose original address in a crabbed scholastic hand was now overlaid by the work of many clerkly pens. It was from Dottore Balanzoni, and was dated from a villa — which turned out to be, after all, but a dilapidated *masseria* — in the remoter environs of the capital.

"She is here," he wrote; "come." She, it immediately developed, was Donna Violante. And her condition? That was portrayed as promptly, if all too briefly: she was eating her heart out.

No supplementary means of succor was suggested; no consoler of Violante's own years was mentioned. The Freiherr felt that he himself was frankly treated here as a young man, and was not displeased. The image of Donna Violante came to his mind once more; he reviewed the varying outward forms that heartbreak may assume. He saw her with a pale cheek propped by an elbow

on some ruinous balustrade; he saw her dragging her weary feet regretfully, perhaps remorsefully, through some dank, neglected garden . . .

He read the letter again and smiled at the determined efforts of the old gentleman from Leyden to throw himself into the pulsing concerns of life. Despite this obvious intention, the tone of the letter was singularly nebulous, indecisive. It betrayed throughout the accents of the temporizer; it seemed to convey a vague apology for inaction. And, indeed, why should Balanzoni, why should anybody else linger in a place so curious and so curiously situated? Was it mere whim? Was it fear? Was it simply nerveless incertitude?

The Freiherr walked through the town to the harbor, creasing his letter and wondering what response — whether of word or of deed — he should make. Donna Violante would leap to his eye as a pleasing possibility whenever the friendly hand of another was advanced to perform the propelling act; the string sounded vibrantly enough when plucked by some power outside himself. A look from Bruno, a word from Mam'zelle, a line from Balanzoni, and there she stood. But there seemed little within him to enable him to do this for himself, and every vibration caused from without was a thought weaker than the preceding one. No; more than the chance phraseology of a letter was needed to make him feel that he was still young. His best years — his good years — were past; he lived by proxy; he felt by mere secondary impact.

What miracle could be expected to turn back the hands of time, to make good his general dilapidation, to string to a vigorous tension the relaxed fibre of his spirit?

He was now upon the rough flagging of the quay. Ships and facchini multiplied; casks and boxes blocked his way. The smells of the port, grateful or otherwise, were stronger in his nostrils; the cry of a sailor, silhouetted against the fleckless blue, came down from a yardarm overhead; a coasting steamer, at anchor for the past hour in the harbor, gave repeated signs of coming departure.

Before one of the houses fronting on the quay he saw gathered a little knot of three or four men. One in the middle received the deference of the rest, and all of them gesticulated freely in the direction of the house, as might a great landed proprietor and his familiars. The central figure suddenly added a sweeping gesture to those already made, — a gesture to portend immediate and radical changes of much moment, following upon the exercise of the master's own good pleasure. The Freiherr looked more closely. It was Bruno.

## VIII

Their eyes met. Were the rancours and heartburnings of the past done with, or were they still to prevail? Had Bruno forgiven? Would he not grant some recognition of the Freiherr's services

in one direction, however ill-judged his efforts may have been in another?

Bruno advanced. In a tone calmly gracious, but slightly distant, he gave the Freiherr greeting. Things had taken on a new aspect. He had now been beheld by his former friend as a great landed noble in the very exercise of his high functions, and all recollection of the brief hour of mortification at Belriguardo he could well afford to set aside.

The Freiherr detached Bruno from his stewards and agents and told him that Malevento was in the town.

"I know it," replied Bruno, not warming appreciably. "I have seen him once or twice."

"Why is he here?"

"Because I am here, I dare say," replied Bruno, turning aside a little, as if still interested in his house. "He heard where I was, and followed."

"Why?"

"To learn what he seems to have been unable to learn elsewhere."

"Has he learned it?"

"Not from me," said Bruno, looking askance at the shipping, with a dark frown.

"You had nothing to tell?"

"Nothing."

Von Kaltenau pondered. Bruno was cooling; Bruno was no longer gracious—he was become almost sullen; that cruel wound stung and smarted still. He himself was in part to blame and ought

to make what amends he could. He held the means of grace within his hand — a means of grace to serve for either: should he employ it upon himself while doubting if his case might not be beyond its efficacy, or should he employ it in behalf of another with whom it was much more likely to succeed? And there was Bruno's friendship; he could not reconcile himself to the idea of letting it slip away.

Bruno thrummed upon the head of a cask and looked at his companion as if to ask what further thing he had to say. The Freiherr worked his clasped fingers behind his back; here, truly, was a youth to whom he owed a debt of gratitude that never could be fully discharged. Everything that he had seen he had seen through Bruno's eyes; everything that he had felt had reached him through Bruno's well-attuned nature. His enjoyment of earth's beauties and his interest in humankind had been quickened through this medium. Left to himself, he was helpless — there could be no deception here. It was Bruno who had revealed Rome to him, the world to him, the men and women in it. One woman, particularly. Alone, he should have been blind even to Belriguardo, and pulseless even before Violante. In his eyes she was only what Bruno had made her seem. Even now, before his own unaided vision, she would be doomed to sudden collapse and extinction. The part for him to play was the part of renunciation. The animation of his past month

had been but a temporary and deceptive revival; his dulled, numbed being had been galvanized to a brief and ghastly similitude of life. There was nothing left for him but to help on the happiness of others. Already he felt himself drawing back into the cool gray shade of altruism — the Last Refuge, as it seemed, if any indeed remained.

"Have you received all the letters you expected?" he asked at last.

"I hope so," replied Bruno.

"Here is one."

"It is addressed to you."

"But meant for you. It will replace another that was sent to you, but never reached you."

"Never reached me?"

"One from a woman."

Bruno's eyes lighted up. "A woman? Was it from Donna" —

"I shall not go so far as to say that. But this one is."

Bruno took the letter and cast a puzzled look at the envelope. "Where did you see the other?"

"In the hands of Giacinto Malevento, who leaves this place within an hour." He looked at his watch. "No; less than that."

"How did he get possession of it?"

"Perhaps they can tell you at the post-office. Meanwhile, read the one you have."

## IX

As Bruno stood there, a few moments later, in full knowledge of Donna Violante's place of retreat and in full appreciation of von Kaltenau's continuing kindness, a carriage laden with a variety of light luggage came clattering along the rough pavement, headed for the point of embarkation. The occupant, with a nervous eye fixed upon the steamer at anchor in the middle of the harbor, urged the driver to push on his stumbling beast, and held in place as best he might the bags and portmanteaus jostled to and fro by the rough rapidity of his course. It was Giacinto Malevento.

Bruno called to the driver to halt.

A clumsy facchino, crossing before the horse at that moment, dropped a case of oranges, and the resulting wreck made an instant's delay inevitable.

"I stop on your command, of course," said Malevento, pointing satirically to a second porter who had fallen over the first and blocked the narrow way entirely. "What is your pleasure?"

"To hold you where you are."

"For a moment, my dear friend; no longer. I have information, and must act upon it."

"I shall act too. The foul means you have employed shall not go unheeded — nor unpunished."

"'All is fair' — you know the rest. You know everything, save the one great essential, which remains my secret and shall work to my advantage."

"I know all that you know," said Bruno, savagely.

"Then why are you loitering here? But the reason is plain: the new master, engrossed in the novel pleasure of possession. May these new possessions be more real than others have proved!"

"They will be. They are," said Bruno, shortly, with a rising anger.

"Ah, the dilemma of opposing interests, then — too much for an inexperienced boy to grasp. Let me help you — let me share your burden. Go on looking after your new houses and lands; I will look after the rest!"

Bruno, with a fierce cry, instantly had his foot upon the carriage-step and his hand upon Malevento's throat.

"Bruno!" cried the Freiherr; "not here; not now!"

Malevento, rolling his eyes wildly, reached for the driver's whip. Both his race and his rank negatived the notion that he should combat as man to man with the mere elemental weapons of nature's own providing. In default of a knife to plunge into the throat of this savage beast or a pistol to point against his breast, a whip-cord slashed across his face or a whip-handle broken over his head must serve the turn. But Bruno crowded him back among his bags and choked him black in the face.

"You miserable wretch!" he cried; "I know all you know and how you learned it! I know

where you are going and why you are going, and I shall prevent it!"

"Fall back, you mad young savage!" said Malevento, articulating as best he might through the viselike grip of Bruno's strong brown hands. And then, to the driver: "Go on; go on!"

The horse, lashed vindictively by the coachman, sprang forward through the débris that littered the roadway. The carriage, with a crunch and a jolt, passed over the broken boxes, and Bruno, none too firmly poised upon the step and embarrassed by the shifting mass of Malevento's luggage, reeled backward and barely saved himself from falling flat in the roadway. Before he had fully recovered himself, Malevento, rattling ahead rapidly, had gained the quay.

"I will follow him," panted Bruno. "We will board that steamer too, and reach the villa as soon as he does."

"My dear Bruno," expostulated the Freiherr, aghast before a flight still more hurried than any they had undertaken yet; "this is quite impracticable. We have our luggage, our concerns here, our indebtedness to settle, our — friends" —

"Our friends? I have you, and you have me. What more?"

Von Kaltenau's eyes moistened as Montegrifone thus suddenly and completely sealed their reconciliation.

"Mam'zelle Hedwig," he said, "could scarcely be left here without a word of" —

"Humph! She is still with you, then?"

"Still with me," replied the Freiherr, patiently. "But what difference is there in an hour or two? Or even in a day or two — if you are sure of meriting the first place in Donna Violante's thoughts?"

"An hour or two?" cried Bruno, stridently; "a day or two? Say a year or two, and spend them here, with your blood thickening into pitch. But I — can I wait calmly here, knowing that every moment is" —

"Take the train."

"No train leaves till dusk. And the last one left an hour ago."

"Intercept that one." For Trapani, most remote of all places, lies at the end of a long, wide bend, to cover which consumes the better half of a day; — the minimum of distance, the maximum of time.

"How?"

"Find a vetturino at once. We can set out within half an hour, everything in readiness, and all dues discharged. Get a good coach and good horses. It is a mere dash across country of twenty miles."

This proposal caught Bruno's fancy, and fell in with his urgent need for action. To sit passively on land or on water, in company with a hundred other people, all equally the victims of a formal time-table and a hopelessly indifferent engineer, would be intolerable. A mad course over mountain roads responded more closely to his mood: he himself might urge and cry and belabor, might

stimulate by voice and example and promise of gain the lagging energies of man and beast. Sturdy shoulders set, if need be, against reluctant wheels, impassioned imprecations hurled at the heads of loitering carters . . .

"I choose your way," he said. "And may the steamer be late!"

"The steamers almost always are," said the Freiherr, composedly.

## X

Sunset. The Ave Maria echoed faintly from height to height along the far sweep of girdling hills, and the last rays of the sun illumined with a golden mist the green reach of plain and the blue expanse of bay and set a silver-purple bloom upon the distant mountains whose wide embrace inclosed the most enchanting prospect that human eye may view or human memory recall. The plain was luxuriant with spring's richest leafage of citron and lemon and odorous with the far-flung breath of orange blossoms innumerable. The sea pulsed with the swift lightness of fishing-boats returning to port under ruddy sails that glowed more ruddy still before the enkindled gleam now shining from the west. The mountains swam and wavered in suave outlines that almost merged in the unsullied azure of the sky itself, and reared their high-perched villages to shine pink in the full-flooded glow of the day's last hour, and looked down

proudly upon numberless lovely villas at their feet, where recessed loggias or long-drawn balustrades broke with faint shadows the universal reign of light. And above all the mountains — in the midst of their revering circle — rose one more beautiful than any. Its triple peaks hung there delicately in a tender bloom of purple, like the vast and noble tent of some Saracenic emir seen, or half seen, through the delusive air of the desert. And a sole pink cloud, the only one in sight, hovered above its central peak, like a crown descending upon the brow of acknowledged majesty. And at the mountain's foot, upon the edge of the bay, was seen, or half seen, a city. Its white walls, its domes, its towers, rising above the citrons and tamarisks and magnolias of the plain, caught the same pink glow that suffused the whole wide prospect. But distance softened its outlines to uncertainty, and the lance-like forms of many cypresses that rose dispersedly between teased and thwarted the eye that would achieve a clearer vision. Yet there it lay, the city palpitant, the city illuminate; the city of highest hopes and of most boundless desires; the city that, seen with the eyes of the heart, shines gracious and alluring beyond all others: — La Felice, the City of Happiness.

And upon its own rocky spur sat, like the rest, the Villa dei Dubbii and shared this enchanting prospect with its mates. But the villa was now a villa by courtesy only — a villa merely through

memory's retrospective charity. It had sunk slowly to the last stages of neglect and dilapidation, and was now little better than a farmhouse, little more than a tavern that humbly requested the poor patronage of the infrequent passer-by and echoed to the brief joviality of carters noisy over their cups. And young Rocco, who ruled its half dismantled chambers and stabled his draught horses in its cavernous basements, was at once husbandman and host. A few beds, seldom occupied, stood gauntly beneath frescoed ceilings; and a garden, an orchard, a haycock, and two or three butts of wine hidden away somewhere in the villa's dusky substructure kept him in countenance when his rudely lettered sign caused an infrequent traveller to halt and to request the customary refreshment for man and beast.

Young Rocco had worked contentedly enough among his vines and sung as he plied his mattock in his barley patch; and Barbara had cooked and washed and spun; and the baby had played with his toes or crept down the dishevelled avenue of holm oaks in search of casual fallen leaves — all three equally regardless of the great outside world and its interests. And now the world was come to them. The last few days had brought it. It had come on foot and on wheels and on horseback — a strange, diversified world that none of them had ever known, not even the baby. And it moped in ones and twos along the broken pavement of Rocco's terrace, and sat meditatively for long hours

over unsipped glasses of wine, with its elbows planted on his rude and rickety tables, and conferred in ominous whispers among the unkempt laurel thickets where the pedestals bereft of statues gathered mosses unto themselves through the uneventful years. But most of all did these strange creatures lean forward over the disintegrating sandstone balustrade and gaze in long silences at the distant city. And more than at any other hour were they prone to this at the hour of sunset, when one great dome caught at the excess of golden light and all the multitudinous topmasts of the harbor seemed tipped with living fire. Then they would look fearfully at one another, and each say to his neighbor — yet oftener each to himself — "To-morrow. We will go down to-morrow."

But to-morrow came, and still they tarried. Hope seemed no stronger than fear; expectation was palsied by doubt. Young Rocco, never of too speculative a nature, gave up speculation altogether. He and his wife attended to the wants of their guests as best they knew how, and carried on their customary occupations as best these interruptions would allow, and came to heed scarcely more than did little Nino himself the timorous accents of that reiterated word: To-morrow, to-morrow.

The sun sank, the last echoes of the chiming bells died away, and the sound of a carriage that coursed furiously along the doubling road below

came up through the olive grove shivering in the twilight. The clamor mounted, the carriage stopped at the ruined posts that flanked Rocco's dismantled gateway, and two men, Bruno and the Freiherr, advanced rapidly along the oak avenue toward the terrace upon which a dozen or more despondent persons were just settling down to a frugal supper of Rocco's providing. Von Kaltenau, scanning the group rapidly, saw several familiar faces — among them that of the old man whom he had once found musing amidst the ruined temples of Metapontum — and as many strange ones. Bruno's eye, brushing past all these, friend and stranger alike, saw but one thing: Donna Violante, leaning against the balustrade with drooping head, while close beside her, holding her hand and whispering in her ear, stood Giacinto Malevento.

## PART VII. — THE CITY OF HAPPINESS

### I

To-morrow had dawned thrice upon the Villa dei Dubbii, and once more still, and yet again, and the doleful dwellers within that House of Doubt had made a collective resolve that the next to-morrow should be the last, when the arrival of Donna Violante, whose coming was late and purely by chance, plunged them back into the gloom from which they had been striving so heroically to emerge.

"We must make an end of this," Dottore Balanzoni had said one afternoon, addressing the whole sad company. "Let us summon up our courage, and risk all upon the last cast of the die. We have all but reached our goal; let us learn everything, whether of good or ill, that may await us."

"You are right," said the Lady of Quality, in fullest approval. "Such a strain is unbearable. The worst certainty could be no worse than this dreadful suspense. My coaches shall be made ready — to-morrow. You shall all go with me; to-morrow morning we will meet our fate in a body."

Then Donna Violante had come, bringing her

own uncertainties and fears, exhausted, exasperated, and attended, as ever, by Monna Clotilde. They knew her plight already, and little time was lost before she had learned of theirs. Violante threw a vindictive glance of hatred upon the city beneath them, — the city of her birth, — and spread a smile of disdainful pity over the doubting and despondent souls that had come flocking round her.

"This, then," she cried, as she extended her arm toward the distant walls that rose from the girdling plantations of citrons and medlars, "is the asylum you have imagined, the last harbor of refuge to which you have all shaped your course! Then let me tell you that you might have made a better choice! Well may you linger here in hesitation! You look for light, for joy, for the fulfilment of every dearest hope; but you will be disappointed. I who speak know that city and know it well. I was born there, bred there; yet what has it given me, its daughter? Coldness, injustice, harsh severity. It has repressed the best impulses of my nature and thwarted my every just desire." Donna Violante spoke indeed as a daughter, but as the daughter of stern and unsympathetic parents, contrivers of restraints and coercions, callous inflicters of punishment. For her the city was a city of hard-faced fathers, of indifferent relatives, of carefully guarded confinement, of broken hopes and balked desires. "Forego your expectations, whatever they may

be," she cried, with impatient scorn. "If your last hopes are centred here, I pity you indeed!"

The little company cowered beneath these cruel buffets. Action once more was palsied; to-morrow held no more promise than to-day.

There was a certain self-absorbed student among them, an abstracted follower of the courses of history, to whom to-morrow was less than yesterday, and yesterday less than the day before. He held aloof from the others and apostrophized the city softly, and was shaping a private resolve to flee alone forthwith. He was impatient to move through a town whose varied inhabitants had lived at once under a triple code, — that of the Saracens, the Normans, and the Greeks, — ruled by masters who had blended with the laws that governed Rouen and St. Lô the Codex of Justinian and the precepts of the Koran. He was eager to find himself beneath the roofs of monuments that fused these three racial influences in enduring stone and marble, and to stand before the tombs of kings who had spoken the triple tongue of Athens, Arabia, and Norman France. Particularly did the Arabic fascinate him. Though the name of the city was Greek, the lesser details of its nomenclature were largely Oriental. "Cala," he would murmur; "Cássaro; Kalsa: the immemorial East still stamps their harbor, their streets, their squares."

He lay these considerations before Donna Violante, timidly. But for her the city was not a city

of the past; no, rather of the poignant and embittered present. She stared at him in disdainful wonder and gave him no reply.

Less fortunate was a certain placid, silver-headed scientist, whose absorbing interest in botany had plunged him into the midst of the Sicilian spring. He too would lean over Rocco's balustrade — to spy out a certain lordly and historic pleasure-house on the further skirts of the town, a retreat devised for their northern rulers by Saracenic artisans. There were fountained recesses crowned by honeycomb work, and decorated with mosaics of peacocks and huntsmen, and bordered by ornate inscriptions in the ancient Cufic character. But above all, there was the garden. And the sufficing name of this lovely inclosure was El-Aziz — The Glorious. For as Europe was the glory of the world, — thus the text ran, — so Italy was the glory of Europe, and Sicily was the glory of Italy, and this garden was the glory of Sicily — the ultimate glory of glories. "And I must see it," said the gentle old man.

"Go, see it," said Violante, cruelly; "and let me know if you find there more than I have found: a few orange-trees, such as may be seen anywhere; a few neglected bean-beds, lying between unkempt paths; a broken cart; a heap of brushwood; a ragged child or two . . . Are these the elements of glory? Pray let your foolish fancy die."

The poor old man dropped his head and stole away. For him, also, to-morrow now held no more than to-day.

## II

But Donna Violante's exacerbated spirit soon remitted such excesses as these; an impatient scorn presently gave way to passive despondency — a mood that threatened to lead on to absolute melancholia. Monna Clotilde set a studious eye on these changing phases, and Madama Sophonisba a sympathetic one. "I must soon take steps to rescue that poor girl from herself," she said, — "and from her companion." Madama Sophonisba had definite grounds for a quickened sympathy. For more than a week, now, she had been carrying in her bosom a letter from the niece the sight of whom, in the midst of the new and noble circle that surrounded her, was to bring a long, laborious journey to a brilliant close. The Lady of Quality read the letter, and reread it; in fact, its reading had come to be almost a habit. She read old meanings out of it, and new meanings into it. She read charges of cruelty and injustice there, and accusations against individuals and against a whole social order, — even against a whole civilization. She was full of doubts and fears: fears for the inexperienced girl who had elected to overstep the dividing line drawn by race and speech and creed and had attempted to make a life-place for herself in an alien society; grave doubts whether that society could be the splendid and soul-satisfying thing that it must be if her own ideals were

to be realized and her long progress to end in triumph. But one doubt, graver than any, assailed her incessantly: the doubt whether she had done well to send word at a venture to Bruno, all unknown to Violante, of the place where the poor fugitive was to be found, — by the letter, in fact, that had ended the last of its repeated flights in the hands of Giacinto Malevento. But as she saw Violante sinking more deeply into despondency with every hour, she determined that no other course could have been possible for a feeling friend.

"I was right to do it," Sophonisba declared to herself, "and the poor despairing child shall know what I have done."

She found Violante in the lower part of the grounds, where she was strolling alone through a neglected tract overgrown with palmetto and prickly pear. On this inferior level not even the most wilful eyes could by any chance perceive the distant city.

Madama Sophonisba told her of the letter to Bruno, and would have gone on with her own plaints and fears, but that Violante, pricked as by a goad, stopped her. This invasion of her maiden reserve dispelled her despondency and aroused her earlier temper to its fullest pungency.

"How dared you do such a thing!" she cried; "without one word from me, without one word to me! And you say, besides, that you have placed one of your coaches at his disposal! That is odious, impossible!"

"Not impossible in my part of the world — nor in many others."

"It is in this!"

"You strain at gnats — now?"

"But I will not strain so far the conventions of my own order. And as for that other unfortunate girl within this city's cruel toils, believe the worst, believe the worst!" And Violante fled away, weeping bitterly.

Madama Sophonisba could not save herself from yielding complete obedience to this passionate injunction, but the others round her were already recovering from the lapse into despair that had followed Violante's arrival. "One may easily give undue heed to the hasty words of an inexperienced girl," they said; "she overcasts everything with the tints of her own little griefs and disappointments. She shall not influence us. We will go down — to-morrow."

But before to-morrow came another fugitive arrived, as if fleeing from the city of wrath itself. At noon a coach stopped just outside Rocco's gate, and a young woman whose face bore all the evidences of dread and distress that accompany a hurried and aimless flight begged for momentary asylum and refreshment. As she came along the terrace and caught sight of the Lady of Quality, she gave a glad cry of joy and relief and fell tearfully upon the ample bosom of her unlooked-for relative, where she panted out her tale of injury and woe. A selfish, neglectful, cynical husband,

unjust and hectoring relatives, a scoffing society debased and corrupt — all these had conspired to break her will, to smirch her ideals and to prey upon her substance. "My dearest aunt," she sobbed, "if you are going down there, think twice, think twice!"

"Ha!" cried Monna Clotilde, to Violante; "you hear that!"

Yes, Violante heard it, and the others heard it, and again to-morrow was postponed.

## III

The tide, then, ebbed once more; but soon it was again at flood. "How!" cried the painter to his poet; "shall such things deter us? What have we here, after all, but the distresses of one young girl the more? Shall we not, rather, press forward to a city where such interesting episodes are possible? Life, surely, is there, — the life we are in search of, and the life we need!"

"The distress of one young girl!" muttered the wistful old man from Metapontum; "what is that in the great bulk of human concerns? It is little to you, and less to me; there are other things upon which we, inured to the world, may fix our thoughts. She and her trivial misfortunes shall not affright us. We will go down — to-morrow."

But before the lapse of many hours there arrived a Mere Tourist, hot and angry. He, too, fled from the city of wrath, and vehement was his

clamor. He had been maltreated, robbed. And as a consequence of his own manly endeavors to compel restitution, he had been threatened, then duped, then derided. "Justice is a mockery there!" he cried. "The whole town is one vast conspiracy against the stranger. And those who know best whisper that most of its inhabitants are in conspiracies and counter-conspiracies against one another, as well!" To the student of history, who timidly begged for some reassuring details, he brusquely declared there were none. "A mongrel, hybrid population!" vociferated the Tourist; "a seething mass of chicanery and corruption! Family against family, clique against clique, and all against the Government. Keep away, keep away! There are wheels within wheels, and they will grind the unwary stranger to dust!"

This strident tirade made a vastly deeper impression than did the sobbing recital of Madama Sophonisba's niece. Here was no inexperienced girl, but a mature and well-seasoned man of the world, whose words must have weight. Poor Balanzoni abandoned himself to black despair; clearly a malign fate had set for him one more of her ironical traps. The Lady of Quality relapsed into doubts over the wisdom of her course: surely the offer of one of her own coaches had been absurdly impulsive and romantic. No sooner had she snatched one brand from the burning than she seemed to be thrusting another upon the same fiery fate. Monna Clotilde could have given their

precise shade of value to the wild utterances of the Mere Tourist, but she chose to seize and to magnify anything that might thicken the atmosphere of apprehension in which her hapless companions were moving. She caused the corruptions and evils of the world to dilate before Violante's young eyes. Man was a cruel and selfish oppressor; woman a predestined victim; society a shifting tissue of falsities and self-seekings. To hope was to invite disappointment; to trust was to invoke betrayal. And much more.

Under such vigorous schoolings Donna Violante quickly veered away from melancholy. Her inborn pride regained its earlier fibre; her nature even took on an unaccustomed shade of hardihood. The dignified severity of the outraged goddess came uppermost once more, and in such a frame of mind her two suitors — in case they came — were to find her awaiting them.

## IV

Both came — and but a few moments apart. And Malevento arrived first, to the falsification of all the Freiherr's hopes and predictions. For the steamer met the expectations of the one prétendant, arriving, by some unaccountable miracle, on time; while the coach disappointed the expectations of the other, who indeed had abundant opportunity to put his shoulder to the wheel, and full justification, viewing the accidents of travel, for

vociferating curses upon his horses, their driver, the road, his fate, — the whole undertaking, in short.

Malevento murmured his court in the moments that intervened between sunset and dusk; and Violante, who had received him at first with the boundless hauteur born of her resentment of his earlier indifference and of her mortification over the rencontre at Belriguardo, slipped down presently to a plane upon which she could listen to his words with patience at least if not with encouragement. Surely there were some things in his favor. If indifferent once, he was assiduous enough now; he was held to be a worthy mate by her own family and circle of friends; he offered her rescue from a grotesque and anomalous position; above all, he had come unsummoned, while another, even when called — Well might Donna Violante bite her lip over the officiousness of the Lady of Quality, and droop her head and blush in the fading light to think how fruitless this well-meant service had been, after all.

Malevento pressed his advantage. Who, of all the pack, had coursed faster, had lasted longer? He and he alone was in at the — He stopped himself in the midst of his ill-omened metaphor; surely death — the death of some hunted creature — was the last thing in the world to mention here.

But this ominous note, however muted, was soon followed by another of more ominous import still — a note that sounded like a clarion.

Monna Clotilde, returning from concerns that had caused her briefly to leave her post of duty, was amazed to find Malevento in intimate converse with her charge — and treated with forbearance and even consideration, at that. She instantly gathered the flying threads of things into her own competent hands. She stood forth, before the astonished Violante, and launched a splendidly formal and impressive curse upon the Maleventi, root and branch. She damned them individually, and she damned them collectively. Then, assuming that the representative of that stock before her would justify in the future, if he had not already done so in the past, the most thorough and careful employment of her histrionic talent, she blended in one supreme effort all that memory and invention could bring to her aid and hurled it at his apprehensive head. Violante, none too familiar with the elder school of acting, was impressed; clearly she must think twice before allying herself with the scion of such a house as this.

Malevento would have laughed outright at so naïve a manifestation of belief in the efficacy of tragedy, but for his vexation over such an intrusion at such a time. Violante herself begged Clotilde to retire, and the worthy woman, convinced that an effort of so much solid merit could not fail of effect and of reward, reluctantly withdrew. Donna Violante, more shaken than ever, and more racked by incertitudes, drooped over the balustrade in the waning light and gave pas-

sive precedence to the flow of her suitor's discourse. She scarcely knew what to think, what to say, what to feel, — or, indeed, whether she felt at all . . .

## V

Bruno's heels clanged with gallant speed over the rough flagging of Farmer Rocco's terrace. He was late, just as he had been late at Naples; but he was not too late, he trusted. He advanced quickly on the oblivious pair. He had not hesitated at Trapani, and he did not hesitate here. He snatched Violante's hand away from Malevento. The need of her present moment was decision; Bruno provided it. If his manner was that of a mountain chieftain taking to himself his share of the spoils after a successful raid, this was a minor matter. Violante's hand remained in his.

Malevento's tongue was instantly active with taunts and insults. Bruno's youth, his race, his lagging in love, his confiding inexperience — such things formed his rival's theme. Malevento scoffed at his boyish bravado, at his barbaric ignoring of the conventions that govern the man of breeding, and at the puerile trust that could make him such an easy dupe as he had shown himself at Belriguardo.

But he made no demonstration of physical force, and when he saw von Kaltenau following slowly along the terrace even his tongue lost its vigor. Bruno alone he might have braved; but here was

a witness in Bruno's behalf whose testimony to his own sneaking meanness was not to be gainsaid. He felt himself threatened, as a last resort, by a full exposition of his underhanded courses at Trapani: was not the game, in fact, as good as lost?

However, he would try to hold his ground; in any event he would yield it, if yield he must, without derogation of his dignity. "When you are older," he said, eyeing Bruno with a cruelly contemptuous smile that tore the poor boy's self-esteem like griffins' claws, "you will" —

But the Freiherr interrupted. "My friend here," he said, in a calm, steely tone, "is fully capable of ordering the matter in hand. There are cases where the years take from us more than they give. This is one of them."

Violante looked up, and looked at von Kaltenau himself. Here was light from darkness, a flash from the cloud, a prop when everything seemed wavering. Malevento caught this look and felt his own cause doubly lost.

"Go," said Bruno. "Go with what grace you may, or stay and be disclosed for what you are."

"Go, by all means," counselled the Freiherr, "or sacrifice even the slight forbearance that we might wish to grant you."

Malevento looked toward Violante herself.

"Go," she said.

This triple demand could not but be obeyed. But it was little less than a triple insult too, and

must be avenged. One poisoned barb, discharged in flight, might do the deed.

Malevento, ignoring Bruno for the moment, glanced back and forth between Violante and von Kaltenau. Clearly the coming of the Freiherr had steadied and comforted her far more than Bruno's own; clearly, too, the tide of chivalrous admiration returning to the Freiherr's face was ordained to rise once more to a higher level than that marked by mere friendship. To these indications Malevento added a malicious conjecture of his own.

"I go," he said, bowing low to Violante; "I go, and leave you to your rival suitors — still."

And as he strode away in the dusk old wounds opened, old difficulties revived, and the future of Violante Astrofiammante remained even more beclouded by harassing incertitudes than before.

## VI

The Freiherr lay in the dark beneath his frescoed ceiling — Rocco had provided both Bruno and von Kaltenau with frescoes and bed-coverings — and thought of many things. One stood forth prominently from all the rest: he had heard himself formally characterized as a claimant for Donna Violante's hand. The speaker had been unfriendly, but who could say that he had been ironical? And who could say that Donna Violante had given a warmer welcome to Bruno than to von Kaltenau

himself? Her manner, as a fact, had been warm toward neither; but it was not difficult to see upon which of the two her dependence had instinctively been placed. Her singular situation aroused his sympathy; her bodily presence had begun to quicken once more his dormant interest. Mere sympathy — now fully enlisted for the first time — seemed pushing him beyond a line over which he had not yet, strictly speaking, advanced. But there was this to remember: he had come as a professed friend of a professed suitor; honor, fidelity — both of these extended toward him a steadying hand and held him to the course of duty.

Bruno, too, lay beneath covers of Rocco's providing and stared at Rocco's gloom-enshrouded frescoes. Whatever friend or enemy might say, he could no longer accuse the Freiherr of anything remotely resembling treachery or even coldness. But Malevento himself had come to feel what he, too, had felt all along; furthermore, what was there in Violante's reception of him to bring reassurance on the most vital of all points? He had come as a St. George, a Perseus — and the thanks had gone not to him but to his steed, to his golden sandals. He had done a gallant deed in thus overtaking and dismissing his rival, and he had bravely sung the resounding glories that fortune, at last, had completely established as his; and yet — almost for the first time — his youthful momentum seemed checked and his bright confidence was replaced by careful self-examination.

And Violante? Who shall say whether she too passed the night's long hours in perplexed starings at her own mythological ceiling, or who shall assure us that she gave friend Barbara's rustic bedcoverings the slightest heed? She may have spent the time in futile fusings of two irreconcilable ideals, — the dash, the ardor, the generous enthusiasms of youth with the steady poise and calm considerateness of the middle years. But her candle burned long into the night, and morning showed her heavy-eyed from loss of sleep.

Von Kaltenau was early astir. The first person he encountered was the ancient man of Metapontum. "There is the city, — the City of Happiness," said the Freiherr, pointing through the dewy morning air; "why do you linger here? The birds are singing, the flowers are opening, the sun is shining, the very breeze is instinct with hopes for happiness. Why, then, do you linger here?"

"Not hopes," returned the other, timorously, "but hope — the one, the sole, the last. Is it a light thing to risk all and perhaps lose all? Must the sole throw of the dice left to a desperate man be made upon the instant? Shall the single match remaining in the box on a numbing winter night be struck in heedless haste? This is the *Last* Refuge; if we are disappointed here, there is nothing but blank ruin beyond. I — I shall go down, perhaps, to-morrow."

"He is little better than mad," muttered the

Freiherr. "We must not leave her in such company another day."

A door opened, and a new strange figure emerged upon the dew-dampened terrace. The Freiherr gave one look. "He belongs here; he belongs here!" — such were his only words.

It was a dark yet spectral man of middle age. Tragedy was written upon his every lineament, but he came forward with the even step and firm bearing of one who treads on certitudes: they might be terrible, but they were solid.

"Who are you?" cried the Freiherr, with an involuntary cry. "I — I saw you in the shadows last night, I think. Why are you here? What do you seek? What have you fled?"

"I flee from nothing," replied the other, composedly, "for what follows after me is not to be escaped. My hour is approaching and I am preparing to face it. Heredity has ordered my days and will set its own term to them in its own time. I but study to meet my end as it should be met — as my father met his."

"Your father? And how did" —

"I am my father's very self. I have his eyes, his hands; I have his very shadow. I have his thoughts; his ways; above all, his tastes" —

"His tastes?"

"He was a traveller. Travel filled his life and devoured his substance. He cared for nothing else; I care for nothing else. Yes, I have his tastes to the full, and his years to the full — almost."

"And he died a" —

"He died travel-mad. As I shall. He died there," — pointing to the city. "I too shall die there, within the month — and die prepared, if a lifetime spent in journeyings can serve. And my last scudo will bury me." He walked on.

The Freiherr shuddered. "The man is mad already," he groaned. "No, she shall not stay here another hour — she must be taken away at once."

Presently Dottore Balanzoni came forth, a young man by his side. "Another pupil in this accursed school of doubt," muttered von Kaltenau.

The youth, despite his recent schooling, still bore himself with something of a frank and gallant air; hope — though a hope beclouded — still shone from his eyes. "He is too promising for this, by far."

He caught the young man by the arm. "Who are you, what are you?" he asked impulsively. "And what dread mischance has brought you here?"

"I am an architect," the other replied, "and the city before us has always been my dream. I was journeying hopefully toward it, when, to my own misfortune, I paused a moment at this place. My mind was full of portals and colonnades and cloisters. I saw the pointed vaultings of cathedral naves, and the battlemented friezes of Arabic pavilions. I was Byzantine, I was Saracenic, I was Gothic. Domes, apses, radiant mosaics, all were mine — even the foolish corruptions and degrada-

tions of a later day would have had their use and their interest. There was no room in me for doubts and fears; but now they have crowded out all else. What must I do? Tell me, I pray you!"

"Go; go at once," cried the Freiherr, earnestly, with a reproachful glance at Balanzoni; "and leave me here to take your place. See your churches, your colonnades, your pavilions; enjoy your youth while you have it. I will be your substitute, and will think, at least, of things I may not see."

He turned away with a choking voice. Yes, after all, the glories of earth are for the young. Youth, too, must mate with youth; and as for older hearts and heads . . .

Balanzoni left his student and followed after the Freiherr. He slipped his arm within the other's, and the two walked down the oak avenue together, slowly.

## VII

"You came quickly," said Balanzoni. "I thought I knew why, but" —

"I came — with him."

"With Montegrifone?"

"Yes."

"But for your own ends?"

"No; for — his."

Balanzoni drew the Freiherr's arm yet more closely within his own, and they walked on down the avenue — two elderly men together.

The morning was still young when Bruno and Violante strolled down the same avenue and made their peace — another, if not the last. The great facts were now ascertained in their essential mass and outline, and only a few films of doubt and uncertainty remained to impede the clearest vision and the fullest content.

Violante still felt Bruno to be, as compared with von Kaltenau and with many of her new associates, but a tempestuous boy, — though order and restraint, she knew, would come with the years. Nor was she able to close her eyes to his comparative inexperience. He had done less to settle himself in his new saddle than his friends had done for him — one friend in particular. Whenever she saw the lofty, statued sky-line of Palazzo Montegrifone in the distant city — Madama Sophonisba had first pointed it out to her, and the noonday sun brought it into clearest view for an hour or more, daily — she could not but feel that the Freiherr had been more effective in securing the prompt possession of that storied pile than the new heir himself. But the years would bring experience too: surely his hand would at least know how to hold what it had closed upon.

One thing more: was he heart-whole? That teasing dalliance at Belriguardo — whether with lady or with lady's-maid — had never completely left her memory. She scorned to insist upon precedence; never would she battle for supremacy. All must be hers, and must be yielded freely as a

spontaneous and undisputed tribute, without diminution, qualification, reservation. Not one piece of gold on its way to the royal treasury must stick to others' fingers. The very seigniorage must be hers.

"I will not speak of the Marchesina," she determined within herself. And generosity held her back no less than pride.

"And now, what of Theodor?" asked Bruno, with his swiftest directness.

Violante flushed at memory of Malevento's parting words, and once again at Bruno's own peremptory and masterful tone. Further, she was made to answer questions when she should be asking them!

"I like Herr von Kaltenau. I respect him. I admire him."

"What more?"

"That is enough."

"Enough for his merits, or for my guidance?"

"Enough for both."

"Pardon me. That is *not* enough for both."

"Enough for your guidance, then. Nothing could be enough for his merits."

"You love him?"

"Would you force me to?"

"Little force would be needed where merit is so great."

"What connection is there between love and deserving?"

"You love me, then, for my faults?"

"You feel them? Truly they are numerous enough to make consciousness of them an easy matter, even to yourself."

"What are they? But never mind. I know them. Listen; I will tell you. The first and greatest is persistence — I have followed you too long, too far, too steadily" —

"Persistence," murmured Violante. She thought of the long nights through which he had haunted the vicinity of that forbidding palace in Rome, of the crowded days during which he had searched for some trace of her at Naples, of the gallant pursuit that had led him stage by stage from the Pincian hill to the very roof under which she had been born. "Ah!" she sighed.

Bruno heard this sigh and was encouraged. "Another of my faults," he went on, "is trustfulness. I have trusted in the kindliness of man, in the fair appearance of things, in the honor of friends, in the faithfulness of" —

He paused and looked markedly at Violante, as if expectant of another sigh.

The sigh did not come. "In whose honor have you trusted? — in Theodor von Kaltenau's? In whose faithfulness have you confided? — in mine? Not at all! You have suspected him; you have doubted me. You have challenged us both — you did it not a moment ago."

Bruno hastily muted the string of trustfulness and touched another.

"But my third and greatest fault is fidelity.

From the moment I first saw you my every thought has been yours; my every hope has centred upon you" —

"Are you deceiving me, or only deceiving yourself?"

"Neither," he rejoined. —"has centred upon you," he repeated, proceeding; "my every desire has been to please you, to be worthy of you, to be — Come, why do you turn away? Look at me, I beg!"

"No," said Violante, within herself, "I will not speak of the Marchesina, even yet."

"Look at me. I love you and you only. I have never loved another in my life."

Violante did look at him, long and seriously. "You swear it?"

"I swear it!"

Violante still held him with her eye. Concession was dawning upon her face.

"You believe me?" he whispered.

Violante believed. Her arms fell to her side in unconscious self-surrender. The treaty of peace was now drafted and engrossed, if not actually signed and sealed.

## VIII

The noonday meal had come to a subdued close and many of young Rocco's guests were upon the point of cancelling conscious depression by the forgetfulness of sleep when the approaching sounds

of gay tumult on the highway brought the whole company to their feet and banished all thought of siesta from their minds. Shouts, laughter, and snatches of song mingled with the jolting of carts and the clatter of many hoofs. Presently there came into view a band of ragged, dishevelled gipsies, accompanied by two or three cartloads of plunder. Their leader, dismounting, advanced with a graceful, easy swagger, jerked the thongs of his sheepskin sandals into place, threw back his mop of black hair, jingled his big gold earrings, made a low reverence, and begged permission, in the sweet, infantile jargon of Sicily, to offer entertainment to the gentry assembled before him.

Permission was readily granted. The shabby carts, each thronged with its hilarious crew, squeezed cautiously through Rocco's gate and came along the avenue to the sound of tambourines beaten by the deft hands of black-eyed wenches; and four or five lively young tatterdemalions jumped down quickly to unload the paraphernalia of the profession: poles, planks, canvases, draperies, guitars, three-legged stools, and a number of big battered chests that might yield almost anything. Lusty arms began to set up a booth at one end of the terrace before a pair of fig-trees, and the moments taken for these preliminaries were shortened by the enlivening songs, dances, and antics of those who remained disengaged.

First a tarantella. A throb or two from a

guitar, a concordant tinkle from a pair of mandolins, and a lithe young couple rushed at once into the most inspiriting of dances. The youth spun and gyrated valiantly, yet found time to run his humorous eye over the motley assembly grouped round him; the girl fluttered her gay petticoat and flapped her folded headdress and smiled too — but at her partner, as if in the joke as well, though not so directly. Another couple reinforced them; the mandolins and the guitar sung with redoubled vigor. The four pairs of sheepskin sandals scraped and shuffled with spirit over the rude flagging of the terrace, and the stout fellows engaged in setting up the booth paused now and then to look on for a moment in respectful admiration.

Then a song. A wild, plaintive thing, — shapeless, too, save for the persistent pulsings of its peculiar rhythm and for the recurring chorus that, at short intervals, came repeated from every quarter: from the ridge-pole of the booth, from the busy workers over effects and properties behind an improvised screen, even from the half breathless dancers themselves; — a ritornello laden with the pain and passion, the longing and unrest of all the ages, and tissued from the formless wailings of the most ancient East; — a refrain that called for the gentle and regular swaying of the body, for the soft clapping of the hands, for the eye's abandonment to all externals and for its fixture upon the eternal, immutable verities within.

All were impressed. "Why," said the Mere

Tourist, to the painter at his elbow, "I have been everywhere and have paid to see everything, but I have never found anything so perfect as this. They look as they ought, they dress as they ought, they act as they ought! It is too good to be true!" As indeed it was.

Meanwhile, Rocco and Barbara, at a sign from the gipsy leader, were ranging their chairs in orderly rows before the stage. The sounds of pounding, of dragging, of pushing multiplied behind the curtain and the little band of refugees began to seat themselves in expectation. The pact between Bruno and Violante still held inviolate. They sat together in the front row and von Kaltenau took a chair just behind them. The Lady of Quality, with her niece, majestically claimed a conspicuous place, and Monna Clotilde, with an air of lofty patronage, seated herself well to one side. The historian prepared to make a gracious descent to folk-lore; the young architect grouped himself with the poet, the painter, and the novelist; the silver-haired botanist and the ancient from Metapontum looked on wistfully from afar. The madman watched all from his own window, above.

Scarcely was the company brought to order, when the sound of wheels was heard once more on the highway and another traveller stopped at Rocco's gate. It was Mam'zelle Hedwig, in a numbered cab. She had followed on from Trapani and had put up at a hotel in the city itself. Then she had made a hard-and-fast bargain with

a cab-driver and had given herself the luxury of a course beyond the walls. It was decidedly an expense not to be repeated too often, but as Mam'zelle looked round her and saw so many familiar faces and found herself in the very thick of an entertainment that might rival the doings at Belriguardo itself, she felt sure that so few francs had never brought the promise of so many pleasures. "I might have given that man a sou or two more," she said regretfully.

Mam'zelle, after a general welcome of much warmth, took her place beside the Freiherr. She thanked him effusively for the word so thoughtfully left behind, and declared the doubts she had felt about finding Montegrifone and himself still lingering in so curiously remote a spot, and asked how much longer they expected to remain, and wondered audibly who some of the strange people round her might be, and why anybody should care to put up for long with such forlorn and out-of-the-way lodgings.

"And the city so near, too!" exclaimed Mam'zelle. "What are they all waiting here for?"

"They are going down — to-morrow," replied the Freiherr.

"Not one of them will regret it," declared Mam'zelle, enthusiastically. "I had but an hour or two and went about only in the most general way; but never, never have I found a city so beautiful, so interesting, so fascinating! Nothing more picturesque than the port; nothing more delightful than

the cathedral-square; nothing more delicious than those gardens — so many of them, too! No statelier streets in any capital; while, as for that magnificent terrace above the Marina — oh, I could stroll there by the hour! And you, too, are going down to-morrow?"

"To-morrow — or next day," he replied, as the signal to begin the performance was heard.

"Good!" returned Mam'zelle, with loyal heartiness. "And I will go down with you."

## IX

The formal programme — nothing less seemed imminent — opened with another dance, one of a slower and graver character, and a few songs and recitations: folk-songs in subdued minor strains, Neapolitan ditties trolled by a ragged and jovial young chorus of mixed voices, recitals from Ariosto and Tasso — the gay Orlandos and Clorindas and Bradamants of Sicily's painted carts made vocal for the ear. Then the curtain was drawn to, and presently the master-spirit of the revel came forward and announced, in good Italian, this time, the presentation of a masque — The Gates of Glass.

The curtain once more drawn, there was disclosed a small square before the gateway leading into a city. On one side, a tavern; on the other, a shop or two. Above the walls a few domes and towers, roughly painted on a strip of blue canvas, typified the city within; and in the middle a pair of gates, opening freely at the touch of any hand,

gave access to it. These gates were composed wholly of glass — panel-like bits of mirror, fragmental prisms, boss-like jewels in white and yellow, all set at varying angles and reflecting everything brought before them a thousand times over. They swayed lightly now and then, though none touched them, and sent their teasing sparkle even into the eyes of spectators the farthest removed.

The first to approach them was a grave, black-gowned man — a student and philosopher, doubtless. He seemed bowed by a world of cares — others' cares and his cares for these cares — and his sad face was deeply lined by doubts. Seeing these doubts so multiplied by the myriad glittering facets confronting him, he hesitated to enter and fell back. He turned toward the tavern, sat down at a table in front of it, and ordered a repast. While he was waiting, a gaping yokel strayed in, looked at the glassy gates with a broad grin, saw his grin repeated before him as by a world all grins, pushed open the gates without delay and disappeared inside. The philosopher's meal was but a Barmecide feast; the dishes, when uncovered, yielded nothing but smoke, and his liquor went up in a few airy bubbles. The country clown emerged from the city with a bottle of wine under one arm, a strapping wench on the other, and a string of sausages round his neck. He grinned more broadly than ever, his every wish gratified, his every expectation met. The philosopher sadly withdrew. The idlers of the

piazza mocked at him in chorus as they strummed their guitars and beat the merry measure with their feet; and a young minx, who held her place behind a vegetable stall, threw at Dottore Balanzoni, in the front row, a bunch of withered flowers.

The next adventurer was younger and more erect. He had but to be happy, it seemed, yet he passed from place to place and from person to person, picking up this trouble here and that trouble there, and piling his back with the burden of difficulties that were his but by his own perverse choice. Then he paused before the gates and drew his face to a painstaking frown in a search for wrinkles that had not yet come. But the gates of glass put wrinkles there in full abundance and the traveller drew back abashed. The populace chanted another ironical strophe, and the innkeeper, tossing back his black mane and jingling his great gold earrings, threw to Theodor von Kaltenau a scroll tied in a blue ribbon trimmed with silver anchors. The Freiherr read: —

"To-morrow comes not till to-morrow. — *Filippo.*"

The Freiherr hastily crumpled up his scroll, and looked again at the unkempt, barbaric figure on the stage. "Yes, it is Filippo!" he murmured.

It was the Marchese indeed. And the next personage in the masque of this ingenious impresario was an elderly woman, magnificent of dress and majestic of port: "The Pride of Life!" announced a loud voice from one side of the stage. "Who

takes the part?" wondered the Freiherr. "Can it be Donna Ortenzia, his aunt?"

The majestic creature looked grandly at the gates and saw herself grandly reflected. She thrust them open with an ample gesture and entered the city. She returned through them a moment later, and stood looking at them as before. For her they led from nothing to nothing; they were all-sufficing in their own hard glitter and in the glamour they threw upon her magnificence. One poor little pipe, played by a tangle-haired lad before the tavern, wheezed pitifully for lack of air, and a bold young peasant, rushing forth from the frame of the picture, set a flimsy tinselled crown upon the head of the Lady of Quality.

No one in the audience had attached much significance to the handful of withered asphodels, and no one but the Freiherr knew the contents of the scroll; but the extraordinary attention bestowed upon Madama Sophonisba caused a flutter of excitement. "Who are these daring people?" everybody asked. And, "Whose turn will come next?" was a burning question with more than one.

Enter, now, a springy, sprightly, eager young woman who swept over the stage wondering, exclaiming, praising, drenching everybody in a flood of unbounded and undiscriminating good-will. She looked at the gates in admiring surprise, and the gates looked back at her to the same effect: "The Eyes of Innocence!" came the announcement from behind. This optimistic voyager gave a gallant

toss of the head and passed in without delay. The chorus clamored joyfully, and two merry young girls rushed forward from the sides to shower Mam'zelle Hedwig with violets, anemones, and field-daisies. "Respectful homage!" called a voice from the stage — the voice of Capoameno, with no attempt at disguise.

"Good old Filippo!" murmured the Freiherr; "he understands her, after all."

Mam'zelle blushed vividly at this tribute, and others round her felt their own apprehensions allayed. But Donna Violante rose to withdraw upon the appearance of the next figures in the masque, and only the pressure of Bruno's hand sufficed to detain her within the range of these impertinent personalities. However, her apprehensions were groundless, for the two young lovers who now entered showed in their faces only what each found in the face of the other, and nothing ensued save a simple reflection from the gates of their own alternating hopes and doubts. The singers accompanied these fluctuations upon their sympathetic instruments, with voices now grave, now gay, — now timorous, now triumphant. Finally, the entire company, entering upon a joyful fortissimo, invited the young pair to enter the Happy City. Each pushed open one gate, and they disappeared together.

The gates opened once more and out there came a strange, exotic figure arrayed in farfetched splendors and escorted by a train of attendant maidens

and slaves. "Our Lady of Art!" was trumpeted from within the city.

The Lady of Art was none too tall, but she strove for stateliness with a grand good-will, assisted by a towering and fantastic headdress and by the long trailing of her heavily-embroidered robe. She cast a demurely quizzical glance upon her devotees in the audience — painting, architecture, literature, the drama were all represented — as if meditating mischief; then she caught sight of Rocco and Barbara standing well to one side near the door of their own humble quarters, and seemed suddenly to change her mind. She signalled her attendant Nubians to set down one of the great chests and to take up another; then the procession, reforming, came down from the stage, musicians and all, and advanced in intimidating fashion upon Rocco and his wife. This devoted pair, vastly perturbed, shrank back, but the Lady of Art would accept no denial of hospitality. She had marked these simple souls for her own, and meant to work her fantastic will upon them. Farewell to simplicity, farewell to homeliness; the exotic, the factitious, the over-elaborated must reign instead.

The spectators, leaving their rude wooden chairs in a disordered huddle on the terrace, flocked after; none could divine the end of so portentous a visitation. Monna Clotilde, still hoping that a laurel crown would be her modest portion, followed the rest; the dumb poet, still dreading the presentation of a stringless lyre, came with her.

The Lady of Art paused before Rocco and Barbara long enough to conceal the homely garments of daily toil by casting rich brocades over their unwilling shoulders. Then she moved on to the modest bedchamber where little Nino lay sleeping in his cradle, and Barbara, struggling in her robe of gold and purple, followed in swift alarm. The light that illumined the room where Nino slept was the blessed light of day; but the Lady of Art cloaked the windows with tapestries from her coffers and set aburning dim flames in colored lamps. The air that filled the room was the thrice-blessed air of heaven, perfumed with the breath of violets and bay; but the Lady of Art soon had it thickened with pungent exhalations from jewelled censers. A cruse of pure water stood hard by; the imperious visitant tinctured it with some sweet essence or other, and sent one of her maids to perform a like office at the well itself. A wolfskin was nailed upon the wall, just above the weapon that had won it. Our Lady ordered it torn down.

"No!" cried Rocco, casting aside his brocades, and asserting the pride of manhood in its own prowess.

"Yes!" cried Our Lady. And for Rocco's honest trophy she substituted a stand of arms — corselets, lances and the like, stripped from the train behind her.

She advanced to the cradle to wrap the sleeping child in voluminous cloth of gold, stiff and bristling with embroidery.

"No, no!" cried Barbara, fearful of scratches on tiny nose and hands.

"Yes, yes!" returned the Lady of Art; for even the very infant in his cradle must suffer from the over-refinements of a civilization pushed too far.

Our Lady regained the threshold and sank laughing upon a bench close against the outside wall. Her stateliness fell from her like a garment, her face was illumined by a rare and mischievous smile, and her laughing eyes challenged recognition from the company crowding round.

Bruno was the earliest to recognize her. "It is Lucetta!" he murmured. "It is the Marchesina!" he proclaimed to the whole assembly.

## X

"He was the first to know her!" moaned Violante, from the window-sill of her own rude little room.

"My poor, poor child!" crooned Monna Clotilde, at her side. "Look no longer. Come away; come away!"

Bruno and Lucetta were walking gayly up and down the terrace beneath Violante's window. Lucetta still trailed the strange habiliments of the Lady of Art, and she had caused Bruno to put on the rich robe that Rocco had disdained. The false gipsies were refreshing themselves after their exertions; the real gipsies, whose caravan they had

surprised and appropriated, were busy dismantling their booth and packing their carts. Filippo still clung to his great gold earrings, and knocked his heavy glass upon the table with the heartiest abandon.

"Surely," said the Freiherr, "you are the most ingenious fellow in the world! But your ingenuity has involved you once: I can only trust that it may not do so again."

"Ho!" cried Filippo, banging his glass again, as if loth to leave his part; "no one shall be glum, no one shall be morose, if *I* can help it! To hear of your plight was to rescue you from it."

"You may have put us in another," said von Kaltenau, gravely. "If" —

"Theodor, my dear Theodor," cried Capoameno, drowning the Freiherr's voice with a succession of resounding thumps, "not a word more!" And young Cervel-Balzano, a good second, added his own noise to the rest from a table close by.

Meanwhile, Bruno and Lucetta paraded up and down the terrace together. She knew, now, his quality, and the solid ground upon which it was based. All embarrassment between them was over. He was now host, or fancied himself such, and she a new-come guest; never could he expect a better occasion to make full and chivalrous amends for his shabby treatment of her at Belriguardo. He rose to the moment with the greatest gallantry, and Donna Violante, at her window above, burned with indignation and wouuded pride.

"I get my dues, finally!" laughed Lucetta, who had an open fondness for attentions.

"In spite of yourself!" declared Bruno. "No one ever knows how to take you or where to have you. You mystify us, and then chide us for the slowness of our wits! You lure us into the morass, like a will-o'-the-wisp, and then twinkle derision at us for our folly!"

The Marchesina, *in propriâ personâ*, had been very gracious and winning with every one, save Donna Violante, for whom she had a peculiar look and air that cut the poor girl to the quick. "Still roaming?" Lucetta's eyes seemed to ask. "No nearer an understanding?" was the query constantly in her manner. Violante felt keenly the cruel difference in their respective situations. The Marchesina, suitably attended, could safely indulge herself to the full in all kinds of whims and vagaries; she herself, in a position lamentably anomalous, was scarcely on a footing secure enough to ask her own just dues. Surely, too, Lucetta, below on Bruno's arm, glanced up now and then at her window as if adding taunt to question . . .

"Look no longer," counselled Monna Clotilde. "Come away; come away."

But Violante looked a moment more. Bruno, about to relinquish the Marchesina to others, was stooping with great gallantry to kiss her hand.

"Poor child, poor child!" moaned Monna Clotilde, and set a commiserative kiss on Violante's own despairing face.

Violante descended to the garden and sought out Theodor von Kaltenau. "Take me home," she said, like a beseeching child. "Take me down to my mother."

The Freiherr was greatly moved. The last words of Malevento flew straight to his mind. Was this an expression of final preference? Was it a claim upon an assured devotion? Had his own uncertainty, his own blindness driven the girl to such a confession as this? But the point was soon made clear. Donna Violante, in the shelter of an opportune syringa, dropped her head upon his shoulder and sobbed out her heart upon his breast. He was but a friend, then — only an adviser and helper, after all. Never had he felt older.

He sought out Bruno.

"Donna Violante is ready to return to her home. Go with her, and go at once!" He still felt the girl's head upon his shoulder. "Take her and go," cried the Freiherr, in a voice vibrant with passion; "go, I beg you, in Heaven's name, without an hour's delay!"

Bruno grasped von Kaltenau's hand. "One kindness the more! You have done this too for me, and I find no words to thank you!"

"Find a coach, a cart, a cab!" —

"A cab! Where is Mam'zelle Hedwig's?"

"Dismissed. A few francs saved. But there are coaches in the stable. I will ask for one."

Von Kaltenau sought the Lady of Quality.

Madama Sophonisba sympathized, but was re-

luctant to assist. "Ah, that foolish, impulsive offer of mine! I thought you had indulgently consented to overlook it, and now it returns to plague me! What follies one may commit to paper! Release me; I will not be the means of sending this dear girl down into that dreadful city. Scarcely do I dispatch my letter to Montegrifone, when my own niece, fleeing from this same town" — Madama Sophonisba pressed her hands to her eyes and shuddered.

"Ha!" thought the Freiherr; "you, then, were the writer of that letter, and this is what you wrote!" Then, aloud, and very gravely: "We hold you to your promise, madam."

"Release me!" cried the Lady of Quality.

"We hold you to your promise!"

"But do you realize what you ask? Think! An innocent young girl, almost my own daughter, abused, tormented, despoiled" —

"The cases are different. Donna Violante returns to her own birthplace and, I suppose, to her own home."

The Lady of Quality pondered. "You may be right" —

"I know I am right. Not an hour longer must she remain among us and all our doubts and fears. Not an hour longer shall she suffer the ruinous companionship of that misanthropic Clotilde. I should have had a cab for her, but that the" —

"A cab? A cab for such an adventure as this? No, no; she shall have one of my coaches. She

shall have the best and biggest of them! She shall go down in my own!"

## XI

Violante paused before the open door of the coach and turned to take the helping hand of Theodor von Kaltenau.

All the occupants of the villa were gathered round her — a wide participation undreamt of in the Freiherr's original plan. Monna Clotilde wore her darkest frown; Madama Sophonisba was smiling through her tears. The painter and the novelist, ravenous for "life," lent their intent senses to every move. Lucetta and Donna Ortenzia showed the highest interest, if no great depth of sympathy. Rocco and Barbara let the action drift by them, open-mouthed in wonder. The gipsies, loading their last cart, paused, a ragged wide-eyed group, in the background.

The Freiherr cowered beside Dottore Balanzoni. After all, it was the final sacrifice; and who, moreover, could assure him — in view of an auditory so unexpectedly numerous — of the success of his bold device? Donna Violante searched him out with inquiring eyes and once more extended her hand.

Bruno stepped forward and took it — or attempted to. Violante drew back haughtily.

"How dare you touch me?" she demanded. "How dare you face me?"

Bruno fixed her firmly with his eye, and again put out his hand. "It is with me that you are to go," he said.

Violante cast a look upon the Freiherr — a look of doubt, wonder, indignation.

The Freiherr bowed, without a word.

Protest. Rebellion. Nay, rather the noble wrath of a sovereign lady duped by her chancellor. "Another ruse!" cried Violante; "another plot! One last deception, — from you, too," — with a look of cutting accusal at the Freiherr, — "you, whom I trusted to the very end, — you, in whom I confided when I doubted all else!" She felt the world crumbling about her.

"Go," said the Freiherr; "and go with him. It is fit. It is right."

"Fit and right," repeated Bruno. "Nothing else is. You are to go with me, and you are to stay with me."

"Never!"

"Always!"

"I will not listen to such words of high-handed mastery," she said. "I will not be hectored, I will not be coerced, I will not be dragooned. No one shall take that tone with Violante Astrofiammante!"

"No one but me!"

"Go," repeated the Freiherr. "Leave this place of doubts. Learn once more to trust. The world, we have been taught, is but a reflection of ourselves. Yield. Trust. Go."

"Stay," croaked Monna Clotilde, "or live to repent it!"

"Go," cried Filippo; "and godspeed on your way!"

"Stay!" implored Sophonisba's niece. "Listen to one who has herself overstepped the line of race, of speech, of creed."

"Go!" cried Mam'zelle Hedwig. "What bars of race, of speech, of creed must be surmounted here?" She looked with marked significance at Theodor von Kaltenau.

"Stay," said the madman. "Wait till you can place a wreath upon my tomb."

"Go; go!" called the dumb poet. "Be brave; be brave!"

He reached out his own hand — that hand preservative — to help her into the coach. Still Donna Violante refused.

The painter and the romancer were delighting in the changing phases of the contest. The latter now resolved that he too, finally, would participate in life — at least to the extent of handing a heroine into her carriage. No matter that others had failed.

"Yes, go," he said, stepping forward. "Live life in its fulness. Taste its joys, its sorrows, its endless vicissitudes."

Violante struck his hand away. "Fall back, you foolish meddler!"

Balanzoni advanced. "Go," he said. "Enter the Last Refuge."

Still Violante held her ground. She cast her eyes, tearful, troubled, yet indomitably proud, over all the motley and clamorous company.

"I will not go!" she said. "The whole world has combined to dupe me, to flout me, to outrage me. From such a fate I know of but one Last Refuge, and that is death!"

"No, no!" cried Bruno, firmly seizing both her hands. "No; a thousand times no! Your Last Refuge is here! — it is I, and I alone; refuge and sanctuary alike!" He threw wide his arms. "The sanctuary stands open for you; enter."

Rocco shouldered his mattock and trudged away. "The Last Refuge is work," he said; "the Last Refuge is duty."

"Come," said Bruno, with a noble determination firing his dark eyes. "It is a sanctuary where no other image is worshipped, — a sanctuary that no alien ritual has ever profaned. The world, they tell us, is what we make it, what we think it. Be that as it may, we must take its good and its evil together. I will give you what I can of the one and keep you as far as I may from the other. I am wholly yours. Come."

Donna Violante yielded at last, — a convert to the true faith, and willing to overlook the fact that Bruno's tone had far less of entreaty than of command. She entered the coach. Bruno quickly followed. Theodor von Kaltenau closed the door.

The ancient man of Metapontum breathed a

wistful sigh. "Ah! two of us, at least, are destined to enter the City of Happiness!"

"We are destined," returned Bruno, through the open window, "for whatever place I choose." The will of his wild ancestors was his to the full.

The coach drove away. It took, not the highway, but the road that doubled on the slope below the terrace — a road that might lead to the City of Happiness, or elsewhere.

The company leaned over the balustrade and followed its descent. Donua Violante's face showed now from one side and then from the other. None could say whether or no she were content. The Freiherr, immovably pensive, followed every moment of her course — youth was taking its final flight. Mam'zelle Hedwig, standing close beside him, fluttered her handkerchief at intervals. As the coach made its last turn, far below, the face of Donna Violante, looking upward, showed once more, and they saw that she was smiling.

The Riverside Press
*Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.*
*Cambridge, Mass, U. S. A.*